A STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND: THE HEALING EFFECTS OF PURIFICATION

AND INCREASE MEDITATION, SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP, AND LIFE ON THE FRINGE

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Doctor of Ministry

by

Pema Lisa Antoniotti

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This professional project completed by

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

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This research includes both a case study and an exploratory study with related lines of inquiry. First, the case study involved a single study participant, who is a Christian clergy member familiar with contemplative practice. Three lines of inquiry were maintained during the case study. What insights would be gained by sharing the Buddhist version of the Purification and Increase practice with a Christian? Would it move the participant to a deeper heartfeltness and deeper understanding of spirituality in her own faith tradition? Could the mechanism of practice move from Buddhism to Christianity so that the participant could continue to practice this meditation in her own tradition?

During the case study, the participant experienced a deeper understanding of spiritual heartfeltness, and a more easeful and fully embodied sense of spirituality was reported. The participant reported positive spiritual, mental, and emotional changes. She also reported physical healing effects from this practice. There were also some challenges in practice. The challenges were determined to be part of the growth process by the participant and researcher rather than categorized as adverse effects. Although the study is not strongly focused on spiritual theology, in conducting the research, notable aspects and later the exploratory study to the Christian-Buddhist component of the case highlighted growing interfaith relationships and the positive impacts of the

meditation on the participants' experience of their primary faith tradition and main meditative practice.

A year of daily practice combined with interfaith dialogue became the impetus for the case study participant to become the co-researcher in the subsequent exploratory study. At that time, the question evolved to, "Could the mechanism of a specific Purification and Increase practice of Tibetan Buddhism help move practitioners of the Buddhist and Christian traditions into a new spiritual depth, bringing a more profound understanding and experience of wellness and a more fully embodied experience of their spirituality? What effects are attributable to the practice of Purification and Increase?" The approach included components of a workshop, practiced meditation, personal journaling, and surveys. Interviews were conducted to gain needed clarity on journal and survey responses.

Key findings of the exploratory study and analysis included participants reporting more feelings of calm, grounding, and centering; physical healing or the alleviation of pain; a theme of more mindful and kinder communication emerged; effects in healing of relationships, sometimes in conjunction with an improved sense of connection or more mindful or kind communication; and changes in sleep patterns and dreaming. Participants reported gaining different types of clarity on their experience, explored better strategies and self-discipline for their practices and reported new levels of awareness. There was also a distinctive theme in finding confidence, faith, or trust in the practice or in higher spiritual processes or entities such as God. Participants reported on sense of purpose, spiritual needs, orienting to spiritual life, and additional insights. Of special interest is "meditation-induced light" and understanding how the various parts of the Purification and Increase practice play a role in creating the meditation-induced effects noted in the study.

Although the researchers had engaged in spiritual practice for years, the wealth of information in the results of the study was unanticipated. The questions of defining, communicating, and measuring spiritual growth and depth remain unanswered, but the researchers are more deeply convinced that the Purification and Increase practice in this study offers the potential for a depth of powerful healing and transformation over various dimensions of human experience. In that way, practice is spiritually deep. The case outcomes indicate that the mechanism or method of practice in Purification and Increase can be moved across religions to function as an authentic practice within that tradition. However, there are solemn considerations for moving the practice across traditions discussed in the paper, and whether this practice, in particular, *should* move across traditions remains an unanswered question. Insights from this study may contribute to future efforts to describe, type, and assess for depth of spiritual growth and experience related to well-being. Those insights on growth might then be used in chaplaincy or pastoral care models where relationships are established over a longer period of time, such as in skilled nursing facilities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

Homage to the Doorway to True Freedom.

I bow to the Three Jewels and to Wisdom and Compassion.

Contents

Introduction

My first memory was from before the age of two and was probably before I could speak. Since childhood, I have had awareness and insight into things that people do not expect me to know. For example, I could read, add, subtract, and possibly divide before I went to kindergarten. My first memory of a spiritual experience was at age five. Ever since then, I have had profound experiences in my life that are very difficult to describe when using commonly accepted worldly experience as the lens. At such a young age, what could be said about my spiritual experience? I needed to find ways to establish trust and credibility very quickly to operate in daily life. At that young age, I learned the languages of *others* to help communicate. I learned to speak like a child and like an adult. I learned the academic languages of mathematics, science, and art. I learned the language of music. I also learned the language of sports. Today I can speak the language of educators, clinicians, and people in business. I have also studied French, Japanese, and Latin. I believe exploring these contextual "languages" helps me more deeply understand a person's unique cultural language. It also helps me do many different types of work.

Today, I wear many hats. I teach meditation and Buddhism, help run a Dharma center, work as a chaplain in a hospital and skilled nursing facility. I also teach in a secure mental-health correctional facility and volunteer in the prison as a chaplain. I have recent experience as a mental-health clinician, where I use approaches from my experience as a yoga therapist. In my various roles, but especially in the hospital, I give presentations on stress management, meditation, coping with change, and other wellness topics. I have presented across a wide variety of units in an integrated healthcare organization, within their business operations units, to doctors

and nurses, system-wide respiratory therapists, regional mission teams, employees at a skilled nursing facility, and insurance providers.

As I sought to find a language these groups had in common, I realized that in a hospital-ministry setting, people are driven by both the qualitative and the quantitative. Also, I realized that most of my life, I have relied on both methodologies moving back and forth to weave a story with elements of both the qualitative and quantitative. The format of my presentations always includes inspirational stories, case studies, somatic exercises, or personal experiences, followed by data that might explain the benefits of the practices. Finally, I leave listeners with a heartfelt call to action. I practice and work in the intersection between the scientific and the spiritual, so to explore this space in my project that seems appropriate to my work. In essence, I have approached my research of *Purification and Increase Refuge Practice,* similarly, pulling mainly from the qualitative but relying on some quantitative aspects.

First, I will share a bit of my background, which is relevant to the case study. Then I will share the initial single-participant case study. The participant in my case study is the Reverend Doctor Amber Mattingly, referred to in the case as Amber. As a result of her experience in the case study, Reverend Doctor Mattingly continued to practice Purification and Increase daily. Due to her profound experience with the practice, Dr. Mattingly also became the second investigator in the *Purification and Increase* exploratory research study. She contributed to the design and assisted in conducting the study.

Chapter 1: My Background

A Stranger in a Strange Land?

For most of my life, I have also found myself bridging two "worlds." Perhaps it is more accurate to say I found myself located in environments that seemed to be a very different "world"

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from my prior experience, like finding oneself a stranger in a foreign land. As an only child, I spent a lot of time with adults in their "world." When I was in second grade, I moved from a Northern private Catholic school (academically the best in the area where I grew up) to a Southern public school in a county considered the worst academically in the state. I skipped most of the academic subjects my sophomore year in high school but had to take some of the required gym and science classes from that year. Since I was one year ahead in some of my classes, I spent half my day with the academically accelerated students and half of my day in classes with students who were not accelerated. I was also a "Yankee" who lived on the border between the black farmers and the white farmers. I was allowed on the property of my black neighbors, even though it was frowned upon for White people to visit. A Black girl was my best friend until we turned sixteen. Then there were societal pressures that strongly discouraged our friendship.

When I was two, my mother divorced my father. We struggled with finances until I was seven. I remember how my mother pinched every penny for us to survive on her budget. I remember walking long distances when her car broke down and days when there was very little food in the refrigerator. My mother always managed to feed and clothe me, but sometimes she went without food for days. She was the first woman firefighter in our part of the state, and at that time, she was the only nurse to leave college and serve directly in the emergency room. I never heard her say the word feminist; there was no need to mention it in my home. My mother was a living model, and I planned to follow in her footsteps.

When I left high school to enter college two years early, I arrived at a private women's college that some of the wealthiest young women attended. Many of the students attended finishing school with aspirations of becoming homemakers. Yet, I grew up in a cabin in the woods, aspiring to be a scientist.

By 2005, I had changed direction to earn a Bachelor of Science in Business Management and became a businesswoman. In 2017, I graduated with a Master of Science in Education, concentrating in human services, and emphasizing adult education and counseling therapy. My final thesis on "therapeutic presence," was a topic that sat squarely at the intersection of the clinical, spiritual, and educational. Subsequently, I entered the Claremont School of Theology's Doctor of Ministry Program, concentrating on the intersections of strategic leadership, contemplation, and renewal.

Spiritual History

My family was nominally oriented toward Christianity and Catholicism when I was young. My biological dad was a Catholic, and my mother was a declared Atheist at the time. She has since become Agnostic. My grandmother occasionally attended a Methodist Church but deviated from the church doctrine of the time. She believed God's miracle was that he gave you everything you needed to make your own miracles. To her, attending church was not necessary to be devout. My stepfather was also nominally Catholic. In the South, the Catholic Church was quite a distance away, and we attended only on the Holy days of Christmas and Easter. We were on the fringe.

As far as my personal spiritual and religious experience, I was positively influenced by my Franciscan Catholic school years but did not find practical answers to my questions about putting Catholicism's guidelines into practice in my life. Combined with the inaccessibility of Catholic training where I lived in college, I started seeking another tradition that would fit my personal belief system. I spent some time with a Native American practitioner, and later the Unitarians very briefly, and explored arts like Reiki. But nothing seemed to click until I found

Buddhism. Today, I have been a Buddhist for twenty years and have been ordained for eighteen years.

Spiritual Motivation and Professional Work

When I was 14, I knew what I wanted my job to be. I could identify it in my internal language, but I had no words to convey my idea to others. I could not think of any way for it to make sense in our nine-to-five world. At fourteen, I knew what I wanted my job to be: To help make people's dreams come true. But not the ones people talk about; the ones people were too afraid to share or the dreams that were so deep they did not know how to express in spoken language.

Starting at age eighteen, I managed small businesses in food service and grocery. My experience of being the "stranger" continued during this time. For example, there were times where I was the only white employee and the only female employee. Next, I had a six-year career in web development, and during that time, I worked for the state government. I then entered my third career in consulting, focusing on teams, process improvement, process management, and human-error risk-reduction. I enjoyed the work because when processes are made better, the employees' experiences improve. After four years of learning process improvement, I was finally more capable of describing that "dream."

People often define a problem by its solution, or the technology used to fix the problem. For example, when I say, "I need to wash my clothes," most people will imagine putting the clothes into a washing machine. The machine is merely the technology used to combine a cleaning agent with the clothes and then remove the agent. "Need to wash clothes" seems like the problem but is typically a *solution* to the problem of "dirty clothes." We can understand washing as a solution because very few people wash their clean clothes. People also describe

their dreams in terms of technology or solution; for example, a person might wish for a family, children, a good job, free time, a nice vehicle, or the ability to travel or to pursue other past times.

The first teaching of the Buddha was on the Four Noble Truths. They are (1) suffering exists, (2) there is a cause of suffering, (3) there is an end to suffering, and (4) there is a method or way to end suffering.[1] Along with these Truths comes the understanding that all beings want happiness and well-being and wish to avoid suffering. When I heard this teaching, I understood that this was the "dream" I wanted to help come true. Till then, I had been seeking ways to create moments of happiness, but Buddhism offered the possibility of long-lasting change and complete healing in the mind-body (spirit). It offers the end to suffering. I experienced a shift in my worldview and had a new language for the dream; *to find lasting happiness and true health (or well-being).*

Spiritual Training and Model of Chaplaincy

As I gained experience within the tradition of Buddhism, I realized that it takes a long time to learn and develop spiritual skills. I gave up studying any other practices for ten years and concentrated on meditation and study within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Because of the time commitment to gain deep insights into the more complex spiritual and religious training traditions, I am a strong advocate of choosing a single spiritual/religious system to study and practice.

At the end of 2002, I became an ordained monastic. Even though I have lived comfortably in a Dharma center or monastery since then, I have officially "gone forth into

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[1] Bikkhu Bodhi, *The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering* (Kolkata: Maha Bodhi Book Agency, 2012), vii.

homelessness." I no longer belong to an ordinary lay life. Perhaps in a sense, I always felt homeless, finding myself a stranger in another kind of "world." In 2005, I became a Dharma teacher trainee. I helped establish and run two Dharma centers, which are still operating today. Then, in 2010, I took my first unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE). I have served as a volunteer chaplain and meditation teacher in two state prisons, a federal prison, and a mental-health correctional facility. I worked as a chaplain in three hospitals and a skilled nursing facility and served in my local spiritual community.

I have been told by my chaplain colleagues that the way in which I locate myself within the other's spiritual context is unusual or possibly unique. At times, my mentors have encouraged me to try to articulate my personal approach in chaplaincy and make it available to a broader audience. I find it challenging, as it is often a wordless experience, but it may be useful for the purposes of this paper.

Chaplains trained in a CPE program and hired at hospitals and other institutions serve all with respect for the care *recipient's* faith tradition. If there is a conflict between the chaplain's faith and the recipient's faith, the chaplain connects with outside providers to ensure proper care. Chaplains do not have to move outside of their belief system to provide care if they maintain respect for the recipient's faith and do not impose their belief system. They can remain at the border between their belief system and the recipient's belief system, helping establish a sacred space for that person's spiritual needs and process without stepping into the recipient's theological world and outside of their own.

Western culture seems to reinforce a sense of strangers as a kind of alien or Unknown Others who inhabit places beyond the borders of our own life. We often have a strong sense of separation and a sense of difference with these Unknown Others. They are often seen as less

valuable than our friends and allies. But if we stop and think about it, we can look around and see that family and friends can quickly become strangers and even enemies. Strangers can become friends.

I believe that there are no rigid borders between and these "Unknown Others" and ourselves. We are deeply interdependent. I sometimes lead a meditation on a grain of rice to illustrate this point. Students are asked to identify all the people involved in delivering a single grain of rice. The students will start with the obvious, like those who planted and grew the rice, and those who transported it, and those who stocked the grocery shelves. But when we look closer, we must see that it is also people who built the trucks and boats that moved the rice, and the people who built the storage facilities. We must add all those who made the parts of the trucks, boats, and warehouses, and those who made the factories to make the parts, and those who designed and built the roads to deliver all this equipment, and those who regulate them. If we follow this line of thinking, we find very few people are *not* involved in this tiny grain of rice. When we add all the items we use in life, we begin to see how closely related we are to all the strangers around us. In addition to our interdependence, we all share this common wish to avoid suffering and desire to be happy.

Buddhism proposes that the fundamental problem is that almost all of us are confused about overcoming suffering and creating lasting happiness. We all share a common hope of happiness/wellness and a common problem of confusion (or ignorance of how to create lasting happiness and wellness). Every "problem" I have heard seems to boil down to this common wish and challenge.

For me, this commonality dissolves the distance between the Unknown Other and myself, and we become what in Christian circles I sometimes call the "Sacred Other." The Sacred Other

appears as a stranger or Unknown Other, but upon further examination, we find the Sacred Other is as close and valuable as that which we hold most sacred. In Tibetan Buddhism, "all sentient beings" are equally dear and worthy to be free of suffering and to have lasting happiness. To me, the "Sacred Other" is a representative, standing in the front of a line comprised of all sentient beings.

Joshua Jipp proposes that "the Christian is called to engage in the risky, difficult, and rewarding task of both showing hospitality to and receiving hospitality from the religious other."[2] I propose that Jipp's way of describing hospitality is a spiritual calling in the major faith traditions. It is a concept that informs my model of chaplaincy; in service to the recipient, I become a guest in the Sacred Other's theological framework. I do not remain at the fringe, but with their invitation, I step into the sacred spaces of their world to support their spiritual needs. Hospitality is then reciprocated in the care I provide.

As a chaplain, shared hope, common problems, and universal worthiness of compassion are bridges to the patient's world. Being unafraid to travel to their location, provide deep listening, and common humanity draw me into a place *within* their world. That approach is why I describe my ministry as being a guest within another person's belief system. I see the trust that other people place in me to step into their spiritual home as an act of sacred hospitality. Generally, this hospitality of allowing a chaplain to serve in times of trauma or crisis is not like inviting an unknown neighbor to dinner. Fully accepting the invitation and entering into a person's spiritual home is a very personal and intimate position to be in. The invitation is reflective of relationships customarily shared with the most trusted members of one's

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[2] Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 66.

community. I sometimes refer to this relationship as being the "Sacred Guest." Therefore, in my chaplaincy experience, there is a reciprocity of intimate hospitality within the context of the recipient's theological framework. This is not always possible for me, but I am not often prevented from crossing over.

Professional Relationships

For me, a natural evolution in professional relationships that progress to involve spirituality is a similar movement from Unknown Other, to Sacred Other to Sacred Guest. I had the great fortune to be the recipient of Christian spiritual hospitality. As my relationships with peers and colleagues deepened beyond, I began to see them as Spiritual Friends, companions on the path who have dedicated their lives, or at least their professions, to spiritual work. I met a few people who were willing to temporarily locate themselves within my world to try to understand through my spiritual lens rather than simply observing from the borders of their traditions. I also was willing to briefly step into their theological space and journey with them to try to understand their hopes, challenges, and needs. This shared hospitality gives rise to a closer companioning on the spiritual path. This movement from Unknown Other to Spiritual Friend is the basis of my personal model of collegiality, and not only accounts for those I study and practice with, but also my peers and colleagues, and sometimes my teachers and mentors.

Working at the Fringe

Moving to the fringe might be a way to serve others, especially the lonely and abandoned beings who often inhabit that space. More importantly, maybe the fringe is one place where the boundaries between ourselves and the Unknown Other more easily dissolve. Or maybe when we have the chance to offer hospitality at the fringe, we simply realize that there is no border at all.

In this way, encountering strangers—the Unknown Others who appear in daily life—can be the start of a profoundly transformative journey that gives rise to new avenues of research.

Reverend Doctor Amber Mattingly and I met in the Doctor of Ministry program at the Claremont School of Theology in 2017. Our journey has taken us into profoundly healing and revealing spaces that have bolstered us in this difficult time and enabled us to serve others with more compassion and clarity. We are formulating new questions for research regarding the function and efficacy of spiritual practices across our traditions through those insights.

This paper reflects a case study of our shared experience at the Claremont School of Theology regarding a powerfully transformative mediation practice and our subsequent research and insights into the practice. Through the telling of the case study, I hope to reveal some of the gifts we received as Amber and I journeyed from Unknown Other to Spiritual Friends. However, the main focus is to illuminate the potentially transformative benefits of the Purification and Increase meditation which we now both practice.

Chapter 2: Case Study of a Modern Christian and a Buddhist Meditation

When I first met Amber, I thought she was a conservative Southern Christian. As a Buddhist, I was unsure if I should speak with her. But I do not always believe the first thing that I think. Instead, I chose to get to know her. Amber was curious about me for other reasons. We met on the first day of our doctoral program at the Methodist founded Claremont School of Theology (CST), where there seemed to be a more diverse group of clergy than usual. Among a cohort of about forty, there were Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Disciples, Coptic Christians, Lutherans, and Unitarian Universalists.

Surprisingly, there were as many women as men. And among my cohorts, it also seemed there were more non-Caucasian students than Caucasians. Yet, as a Buddhist in flowing maroon robes, I still appeared very different. The robes were the reason why Amber noticed me; most of her life, she had a great interest in those who lived on the "fringe." Our connections grew slowly over three years of study at CST and culminated in sharing projects in our final classes. Amber was taking an interfaith spiritual formation class, and I was taking a Christian spirituality class. Amber's assigned task was to learn a practice from another tradition, and my task was to study a Christian mystic. I did not want to study "an old dead guy," but rather a living expression of Christian spirituality. When Amber contacted me to ask if I would teach her a meditation practice, the choice seemed obvious: She would learn a practice, and I would interview her and observe her spirituality.

About Amber

Amber is a forty-two-year-old ordained American Baptist clergy. She was married in 2001 and is a mother of two. Amber was born in Victoria, Texas. She spent most of her childhood there, although she and her family spent a year in California and a year in Virginia while she was growing up. Amber reports her early years were filled with challenges and some specific traumatic events, but there were also times of joy. Amber is the oldest child of five siblings. Because of challenges in the family, among which was a family member's alcoholism, she became a secondary parental figure to her siblings.

Amber enjoyed and excelled at the academic aspects of school. In high school, she was the quintessentially popular cheerleader, except she participated in all of the social cliques in the school and would not confine herself to a single clique. "I floated between every group, and that made the groups mad because they had a tribal nature. I loved me floating, and I thought

everybody else loved it."[3] Although there was not a lot of diversity where she lived, she was the person who always sought out the outsider. For example, "In Catholic school, we had one Muslim student from Pakistan, and I was the only person who was allowed to come to her home for a play date. I found myself in these interesting situations like that—they kept my heart a little soft and the space more open..."[4] This theme carries through in Amber's worldview today.

Amber was exposed to and practiced many Christian traditions. Amber's first memory was being in a United Methodist Church when she was five, but eventually, her parents became nondenominational after their church split. They were very active and involved in the church, especially after her father became sober and had a religious experience while at home. In addition to her home church experiences, she went to Catholic school when she was young. In college, Amber studied at George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor. She had a passion for biblical studies, and she appreciated that, "we read broadly, ecumenically, across denominations and were given the freedom to explore and see what resonated for us."[5] Her experiences with many interpretations of the Bible shifted her sense of "one right way to salvation," and opened her to let go of some of her fears regarding a vengeful or judgmental God. She began to know more deeply that her God was a loving God.

Amber was ordained in the American Baptist Church in 2000, and her husband is also ordained. In 2005, they were called to a Disciples church, where they had very positive experiences. After much consideration, in 2019, Amber initiated the process of moving to Disciples. In 2017, Amber started the Doctor of Ministry program at CST after ending a difficult pastor-couple assignment to a church. Her husband remained at the church where they had

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[3] Amber Mattingly, Zoom interview with the author, April 7, 2020.
[4] Mattingly, Zoom interview.
[5] Mattingly, Zoom interview.

served together. Amber then completed a pivotal yoga teacher-training program before entering

Claremont, which she characterizes as a very healing experience.

Amber reports that as she entered Claremont, there was still an ache. She questioned

where her path would lead and what her next call might be. She has subsequently developed an

innovative ministry for "people on the fringe," which she researched in her doctoral project. She

offers an experience that has at its core the integration of Christian spirituality and yoga (a

system of spiritual formation that can be used in conjunction with most religions).

Spiritual Theology

Although this case study and other exploratory research studies are not strongly focused

on spiritual theology, in hindsight, there are some notable aspects to the Christian-Buddhist

component of the case and the exploratory study, and the fruits of our growing interfaith

relationship during the time of our projects. As part of that, Amber's spiritual theology becomes

relevant. Therefore, some background and discussion on Amber's spiritual theology are included

in the case study, with important aspects discussed in the "Case Study Practice and Results"

section.

Auman defines spiritual theology as, ". . . that part of theology that, proceeding from the

truths of Divine revelation and the religious experience of individual persons, defines the nature

of the supernatural life, formulates directives for its growth and development, and explains the

process by which souls advance from the beginning of the spiritual life to its perfection."[6] This

definition may have some relevancy to the case and exploratory research study. However, a more

relevant but perhaps less common description is offered by Andrew Dreitcer in his CST

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[6] Kevin Goodrich, "Foundations of Practical Spiritual Theology: Walter Hilton as a Case Study in Retrieval," *Open Theology* 7, no. 1 (2021): 91–101.

Christian Spirituality class, where he positions spiritual theology as a thematic category of exploring the many dimensions of Christian spirituality, and asks us, "What it is about the nature of the Sacred, Ultimate Concern, G-D [God] that allows it to be intimately engaged by or accessible to humans (or, particularly, to you)?"[7]

Amber describes God as a loving, all-inclusive God who sent Jesus to model the kind of radical inclusivity God has toward all creatures.[8] For Amber, God is present outside the physical church doors as well as outside the body of the church itself. God did not (in the case of Jesus) and does not require compensation to love or relate to his children. Amber writes, "... in creation all living beings were invited into this loving relationship with the Triune [three in one] God."[9] Not only are they invited into a relationship, but God has granted humanity the availability to achieve total union with God, as exemplified through Christ.[10] In her doctoral paper, Amber lays out three key features of God's relationship with humans,

> First, God's particular love for one people does not preclude love for other people. God reaches beyond human boundary lines of religion, sex, culture, race, and ethnicity. Second, God's love transforms people leading them to holistic healing. Third, people have unique experiences of the Divine.[11]

Amber asks us to consider the church as an inclusive space, "If the church is to be the body of Christ on this Earth, then radical inclusion might mean that the church offers safe space for people from any or no religious background [in order] to explore what words they might use

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[7] Andrew Dreitcer, "Notes on 'Spirituality and Spirituality Studies'" (lecture handout, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA, 2019).

[8] Amber Mattingly, "Christianity" (assignment, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA, 2019).

[9] Mattingly, "Christianity."

[10] Mattingly, "Christianity."

[11] Mattingly, "Christianity."

to described their experience of the Divine."[12] For Amber, God is creative in "reaching outside

of the church doors," and touches the marginalized in ways that demand our attention and bring

insight into "The Good News." I believe a central issue to Amber is what needs to be addressed

in God's relationship to humans. Broadly, I think it is to *redefine the relational possibilities*. "For

me, the Good News is that God loved us so much that God came to Earth to reconcile God to

humanity; in other words, to redeem our view of God and to reimagine a relationship that had

turned sour where humans viewed God as angry, judgmental, and in need of appeasement

through ritual sacrifice."[13] She states, "The invitation is to experience God in all things with

continued openness to God speaking through something or someone new while allowing each

person the freedom to choose their "chosenness."[14] Amber invites us to understand, "all people

are created in the image of God no matter their religious background and that all people have a

spiritual message to share."[15]

Amber hints at the depth of God's relational invitation by stating, "Hagar's experience

gave birth to the understanding that God sees that we can see God, and that each of us has the

power to name the God of our experience. She is our sacred text's archetype of the Other."[16] She

explains, "Hagar's narrative asks us to shift our gaze from the easy storyline to see the more

complex story that rarely gets center stage. As we shift our gaze to the margins, we are

challenged to see the full humanity of the character and offered opportunities to show

compassion. Although the 'Other' can be defined in many ways, Amber's focus here seems to be

especially on the 'Unknown Other.' Amber also invites us to see that many of those claimed

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[12] Mattingly, "Christianity."
[13] Mattingly, "Christianity."
[14] Mattingly, "From the Pew to the Mat," (DMin project, Claremont School of Theology, 2020), 90.
[15] Mattingly, "From the Pew to the Mat," 90.
[16] Mattingly, "From the Pew to the Mat," 87.

within the Christian story were actually the other, "Barbara Brown Taylor offers the many stories of Jesus's life and ministry being shaped by the Other: magi lead us to Jesus, the Roman centurion, the Samaritan woman at the well, and the Syrophoenician woman."[17]

For Amber, accepting God's invitation is a *process,* and there are *methods* that can be learned and practiced. Amber introduces yoga by saying, "Yoga offers the practitioner an invitation to look closely and discover God present within, while longing for connection to God's boundless quality."[18] For Amber, yoga leads to, "a poise of the soul which enables one to look at life in all its aspects evenly."[19] The practice of yoga empowers one to, "distinguish God's quiet voice from the loud voice of society and the constant complaints and inner chatter of the mind."[20] She shows how this sacred listening is an act of obedience and concludes, "Finding God's abundant unconditional love at the center of this inner sanctuary provides a compass to navigate decisions."[21] She then turns the skill of listening to include the outsider, "Listening becomes the way in which Christ-followers see God in the face of the Other."[22] Our relationship to God is, therefore, through our own internal listening and acceptance, as well as through our heartfelt listening and behavior toward the external other.

Theological Synergy

Between Amber and me, I find a synergy in our theological viewpoints. As I become the Sacred Guest of Amber's Christian hospitality, crossing over our theological boundaries to try to see from her vantage point, I find that I resonate with Amber's view of a creative, relational God.

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[17] Mattingly, "From the Pew to the Mat," 87.
[18] Mattingly, "From the Pew to the Mat," 16.
[19] Mattingly, "From the Pew to the Mat," 11.
[20] Mattingly, "From the Pew to the Mat," 46.
[21] Mattingly, "From the Pew to the Mat," 47.
[22] Mattingly, "From the Pew to the Mat," 87.

I also see His works in the fringe as centrally important, and I believe that our conceptually imputed borders are always places of great learning and transformation. Whether that be the border between our inner and outer self, between ourselves and another person or group, or between ourselves and the Holy, these three places are where I believe we can discover Amber's "Other."

Perhaps I was initially drawn to Amber's works because of this *yet to be discovered* commonality. We were forced to the borders of our faith traditions, and in many ways, we both inhabited the margins. We were invited, *and* we accepted the invitation to stand in diverse theological worlds. And we have both served as bridges to help, especially the lost and the outcast, to move from their own personal "wilderlands" to their spiritual homes. We both conceive this as the kind of work central to what one does as a vocation or call. And we both interpret that work broadly.

Questions About Christian Spirituality

Based on my experience in Buddhism, I wonder about the depth at which Christianity is generally practiced, even among the clergy. I have asked myself what would happen if a Christian practitioner had access to some of the practices I know, which have radically deepened my sense of spirituality and embodiment. Are they available in some parts of Christianity? If practiced, would Christians learn something new (or recover something lost)? Would those practices enliven their sense of spirituality and give them further access to Christian wisdom? I have also wondered if perhaps more profound spiritual methods (mechanisms of practice) can apply across the traditions, divorced from their outer cultural form. These questions were on my mind as we prepared to share a spiritual practice. I will first describe what I taught to Amber and then her response.

The Meditation Practice

In essence, there is a lack of a standard operational definition when it comes to meditation research.[23] Alexander Berzin, a popular teacher of Tibetan Buddhism, describes meditation as "to habituate ourselves," noting that the Tibetan word for meditation connotes a "beneficial habit" and the Sanskrit word for meditation connotes "to make something happen."[24] Berzin eventually arrives at and shares a definition of "The repeated practice of generating and focusing on a beneficial state of mind to build it up as a habit."[25] According to neuroscientists specializing in the study of meditation and consciousness, "Meditation can be conceptualized as a family of complex emotional and attentional regulatory training regimes developed for various ends, including the cultivation of well-being and emotional balance."[26] Meditation can be of many styles and comes from many traditions, such as secular Mindfulness Meditation, Loving-Kindness Meditation, Hindu Bhakti, Tibetan Buddhism, Jewish Kabbalah, Christian Hesychasm, Zen, Transcendental Meditation, and Kundalini yoga.[27] Until recently, much of the meditation research did not consider those different meditations may not have common goals or outcomes and do not always involve the exact cognitive mechanisms, but instead simply lumped all types of meditation together.[28] However, more recent studies suggest that "Different mental techniques

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[23] Antoine Lutz et al., "Attention Regulation and Monitoring in Meditation," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 12, no. 4 (2008): 163. Stefan Schmidt, "Opening Up Meditation for Science: The Development of a Meditation Classification System" in *Meditation - Neuroscientific Approaches and Philosophical Implications,* eds. Stefan Schmidt and Harald Walach (Basal: Springer International Publishing, 2014).

[24] Alexander Berzin, "Main Features of Meditation," Study Buddhism by Berzin Archives e.V, September 2011, accessed May 20, 2019, https://web.archive.org/web/20210831221250/https://studybuddhism.com/en/tibetan-buddhism/about-buddhism/how-to-study-buddhism/meditation-main-points/main-features-of-meditation.

[25] Berzin, "Mediation," Study Buddhism by Berzin Archives e.V, accessed August 31, 2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20210831222552/https://studybuddhism.com/en/search?q=meditation.

[26] Lutz et al., "Attention Regulation and Monitoring in Meditation," 163.

[27] Daniel Goleman and Ram Dass, *The Meditative Mind: The Varieties of Meditative Experience* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004), vii–viii.

[28] Daniel Goleman and Richard J. Davidson, *Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body* (New York, NY: Avery, an Imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2018), 68.

and meditation practices produce different physiological effects," or more broadly stated, "Different techniques produce different effects."[29] The wide variety of meditations, from focusing one's attention on the breath to affectively generating and radiating to the Purification and Increase, makes it difficult to describe the common threads of meditation (and this difficulty has additional implications for the exploratory research study discussed in the second half of this paper).

Like the approach to many of the meditations within this tradition, the Purification and Increase Refuge Practice is typically taught orally from teacher to student. Therefore, there is little if no documentation on the practice itself. Therefore, I will describe the practice in my own words, as I learned it from my teacher in several workshops.[30]

The standard practice is three rounds on the mala, counting by physically moving one bead at a time on a circular strand of 108 prayer beads until one arrives at the final bead on the strand. By moving through the beads, the meditation involves physical movements. The meditation also involves vocalization and the use of repeated phrases, as well as visualization. On the first round for each bead, one says, "I take safe direction in the Buddha (Awakened Teacher)," and visualizes colored lights filling various parts of the body in a specific way, first purifying any illness or obstacles and then filling with blessing energy. In the second round, one says, "I take safe direction in the Dharma (Living Teachings)." And on the third, "I take safe direction in the Sangha (Community of Accomplished 'Saints')." The visualization continues

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[29] Alex Hankey, "Studies of Advanced Stages of Meditation in the Tibetan Buddhist and Vedic Traditions. I: A Comparison of General Changes," *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* 3, no. 4 (2006): 517.

[30] Domo Geshe Rinpoche, *Coming Clean: A Spiritual Journey to Wellness* (lecture, Joyful Path Meditation and Healing Center, October 6, 2019). Domo Geshe Rinpoche, *Purification and Increase Meditation* (lecture, WCDC Winter Retreat, January 7, 2015). Domo Geshe Rinpoche, *Purification and Increase Workshop* (lecture, Zoom, February 20, 2021).

similarly to the Buddha round. The meditation involves physical movement, vocalization, repetition, and visualization, all happening simultaneously. An affective component is also typically part of the meditation in that a sense of safety and trust, or refuge, is generated for as long as the student is capable of maintaining that sense. [31] Practicing this meditation while visualizing the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha is the Buddhist's version of the practice. As part of the case study, Amber also visualized God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, discussed in the next section. Inspired by Hagar's story in the Bible, Amber chose to use the name El Roi for God during the repetition of phrases in the meditation. Visualizing God (El Roi), Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is the Christian version of the practice.

In addition to practicing the meditation, I thought it would be helpful for Amber to read about the Tibetan Buddhist tradition in general, as this body of knowledge is that which most directly pertains to the practice. Amber also read a book by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist author who relies on a compassionate orientation shared with the Vajrayana tradition. Finally, she also chose to read a book on purification practices in the various religious traditions. At the same time, I read Amber's essay on Christianity from our 2019 World Religions Class, selections from her blog and doctoral thesis project, and her project summary for the practice we shared.[32]

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[31] Refuge is defined as, "A direction that one puts in one's life that will protect one from true suffering and its true causes, and, when one reaches the goal of this direction, allows one to avoid true suffering and its true causes forever." Alexander Berzin, "Refuge," Study Buddhism by Berzin Archives e.V, accessed August 20, 2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20210831223355/https://studybuddhism.com/en/search?q=refuge.

[32] Amber Mattingly, "Live Free@Yoga Sanctuary," Scared Flow, accessed August 31, 2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911184154/https://ambermattinglylivefree.com/blog/.

Case Study Practice and Results

Amber chose to start with the Buddhist version of the Purification and Increase meditation. She practiced the meditation daily, at a time of her choice, and experimented with what times worked for her. She typically wrote in her journal after the meditation and sometimes included changes she observed in between sessions. We met around two and four weeks to answer Amber's questions and discuss her observations.

Early on, Amber reported challenges with the complexity in the practice (visualizing, reciting, moving, counting all simultaneously), but the difficulties went away after several weeks. Then, when she began to feel touched by the practice, she had some initial feelings of fear or hesitancy in engaging in a practice that revolves around Buddha as the central refuge. Amber noted in her journal, "Questions began arising about what I am doing, where is all of this going, what does it mean to be a Christian doing a Buddhist practice. Am I still following Jesus? Anxiety."[33] It was a process to realize she was placing Buddha at the center of this spiritual experience rather than God, experience the anxiety, and addressing and resolving it. At any time, Amber was free to switch to the Christian version of the practice, but she became curious about her experience of anxiety and chose to stay with it for some time. Eventually, Amber resolved these concerns by successfully reconnecting with her belief in a loving, relational God. More about the intimacy and anxiety aspect of this experience is described in the section on intimacy below.

Amber had a surprising number of experiences, most of which might be categorized as life changing. I have organized quite a number of her experiences into these sections: Spiritual

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[33] Amber Mattingly, personal practice journal entry, 2020.

Experiences, Healing of Fear, and Intimacy (Mental/Emotional), Physical Healing, and the Wisdom of Crossing Over. I will discuss these powerful outcomes and then cover the case study conclusions, which became the incentive for conducting the exploratory research study and including both the case and the exploratory research in this project.

Spiritual Experiences

Amber began to notice new spiritual experiences and changes within the first week. Early on, Amber experienced waking up at night reciting the lines of the practice. The lines would sometimes come to her as she settled for sleep or when she woke up in the morning. This spontaneous coming of the lines faded at some point, but she continued to feel a heartfelt call to the practice during those times. On the third day, Amber notes she woke up in the morning with the practice calling to her, "Felt a deep urge to study my scriptures especially the Gospels." Amber had changes in her dreams and sleep, having more symbolic and vivid dreams. She also reported that the time of rest directly after practice was a time of insight for her, saying, "A couple of times when I was just resting and being, I felt like there were not visions, but different messages. Several times I was like, 'Wow, that is something I need to remember or think about....'"[34] Reflecting on the observations and insights in her journal entries showed the value of journaling with this practice.

Amber also felt a deepening of experience in her other practices. Most notably, she felt shifts in her Loving-Kindness practice, which were overall more heartfelt and open. Amber noted when she was leading worship; she had a newfound sense of participating in worshipping while she was leading. She also reported an overall sense of her spirituality "going deeper."

[34] Mattingly, Zoom interview.

Healing of Fear and Intimacy

We met twice during Amber's practice time, mainly for Amber to report on her experience and for me to answer any questions she may have or to help correct any concerning errors. During our first discussion, Amber said that she felt there was a deep healing of fear. In a later interview, she described the fear as not something that arose from ordinary day-to-day interactions but perhaps something she had carried with her for a long time. This healing began as early as her first practice. In her journal from her first-ever solo practice session, she notes, "[I] laid down after the practice and felt light, lifted, floating. I felt safe, truly safe... like a homecoming."[35]

Amber later shared that the most significant benefit of the practice came regarding intimacy, perhaps on both the spiritual and intrapersonal levels, "As the practice has gone on, I am imagining that I find myself opening and allowing, and it is a wonderful freeing feeling."[36] What struck me the most was the intimacy she described *within* herself, as if she felt such a deep sense of safety that she could reconnect to her *whole self* and also to something greater. In response, I recalled the ways traumatic events can be disconnecting and shaming, and Amber's statements led me to ponder how the *relational safety* might help some practitioners heal from the more severe effects of trauma.

However, gaining that level of intimacy was not always an easy process for Amber. This finding was similar to my own experience as I first learned these practices. I believe spiritual intimacy implies a deep closeness and connection with something that has significant meaning and purpose. We can be overwhelmed and feel vulnerable when we experience a deep

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[35] Mattingly, personal practice journal entry.
[36] Mattingly, Zoom interview.

connection through spiritual intimacy in a loving, healthy way. If unattended, those feelings of

vulnerability can turn into fear. According to Henry Stack, intimacy is "a relationship that

validates all components of personal self-worth."[37] When intimacy is lacking, it opens the door

for disconnection and loneliness. "Loneliness is a distinct and aversive state in which feelings of

sadness and boredom combine with a yearning for meaningful companionship. When loneliness

persists over time, it is a risk factor for developing symptoms of depression and anxiety and for

general dissatisfaction with life."[38] Psychology researchers have shown the value of intimate

relationships. Yet, Owen takes us from the psychological to the spiritual and asserts there is

"overwhelming evidence that intimate relationships and attachment processes are strongly

related to mental health and well-being." Subsequently, He establishes "parallels with spiritual

intimacy, especially with respect to God."[39] There is a lot at stake; we want connection and well-

being from intimacy, but we feel vulnerable and fearful when we get it. In this way, healing

requires maturity and courage to move through the feelings of vulnerability and fear that can

arise.

Contemplative researchers have typically examined the perceived *benefits* of meditation

and ignored other effects that may appear unrelated to health or well-being, so these challenges

of intimacy, vulnerability, and fear did not arise in most of the literature reviewed.[40] One

exception may touch on these topics but does not deal with them in-depth.[41] In the Buddhist

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[37] Scott D. Owen, "Spiritual Intimacy: A Qualitative Investigation of Relationships with God and Their Association with Well-Being" (PhD dissertation, Brigham Young University, 2004), 3.

[38] Owen, "Spiritual Intimacy," 4.

[39] Owen, "Spiritual Intimacy," 4.

[40] Jared R. Lindahl et al., "The Varieties of Contemplative Experience: A Mixed-Methods Study of Meditation-Related Challenges in Western Buddhists," *PLOS ONE* 12, no. 5 (2017): 1, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911214256/https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0176239.

[41] Lindahl et al., "The Varieties of Contemplative Experience," 1-30.

tradition, the mature practitioner understands that spiritual development and healing are sometimes challenging. The practitioner learns how to stay steady and stable as they gain insights. We also understand that there is a range of spiritual experiences associated with each type of meditation practice and that those experiences are not necessarily positive or negative. Amber also had this attitude toward the practice. In week three, Amber attributed a positive deepening of her Loving-Kindness (L-K practice to the post-meditation effects of the Purification and Increase practice and felt very vulnerable in the intimacy she experienced. "It was intense. My ability to feel L-K was much greater, and my ability to radiate L-K was much stronger. Three issues coming up: 1) trust is hard, 2) letting go is tough, and 3) intimacy is too much/ too intense."[42] In response, Amber came back to her grounding and her maturity as an experienced meditator. To explain her attitude, she quoted from Rob Preece, "In this willingness to face unconscious habits we also need compassion toward ourselves as we pass through periods of struggle and discomfort in our practice."[43]

Throughout the case study period and after, Amber acknowledged that this practice touched her very deeply and so profoundly that she chose not to tell anyone about it for many months after she learned it. To Amber, the Purification and Increase meditation is the kind of practice one wants to keep close to the heart. This was an intuitive understanding of traditional Tibetan Buddhist wisdom that guides its practitioners to keep their spiritual practices and experiences secret or shared only with spiritual guides.[44] While quite open within the research context, Amber still otherwise holds the experiences of this practice close to her heart.

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[42] Mattingly, personal practice journal entry.

[43] Rob Preece, *The Psychology of Buddhist Tantra* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2006), 14.

[44] Bruce M. Knauft, "Self-Possessed and Self-Governed: Transcendent Spirituality in Tibetan Tantric Buddhism," *Ethnos* 84, no. 4 (November 2017): 563-564, 572. Domo Geshe Rinpoche, *Sensing Shades of Reality* (Neillsville, WI: Hermitage Buddhist Publishing, 2018), 254. Domo Geshe Rinpoche, interview.

Physical Healing

While many physical benefits such as lowered blood pressure, improved immune function, and easing chronic pain and inflammation are reported in meditation research studies, neither Amber nor I anticipated her report of physical healing.[45] Amber suffers from a chronic health condition, where some of the symptoms are chronic leg pain and stomachache. She has had this condition for the majority, if not all, of her life. At four weeks, Amber noted she was experiencing lots of leg pain and "the meditation helps."[46] But most remarkably, in the sixth and final week of the study, she states, "[Looking back on the whole experience,] I recognize that I do not have stomach pain anymore. I typically experience stomachache or pain at least five days per week. I feel more at peace internal." This unanticipated result foreshadows some of the responses in the exploratory research study.

I must note here that both Amber and I encourage people in general, and meditators specifically, to always seek the care of licensed medical professionals for any physical health condition. Despite Amber's incredible report, she still followed the advice that applies to anyone with a physical health condition to be under the care of a licensed medical professional.

Wisdom from Crossing Over

When asked what insights she gained from the Buddhist practice, Amber spoke of the concepts of purification of body, speech, and mind. She discussed her deepening understanding

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[45] "76 Benefits of Meditation and Mindfulness," Live and Dare, accessed November 11, 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911183610/https://liveanddare.com/benefits-of-meditation/. Alberto Chiesa, "Zen Meditation: An Integration of Current Evidence," *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 15, no. 5 (2009): 585. Richard J. Davidson et al., "Alterations in Brain and Immune Function Produced by Mindfulness Meditation," *Psychosomatic Medicine* 65, no. 4 (2003): 564. Melissa A. Rosenkranz et al., "A Comparison of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and an Active Control in Modulation of Neurogenic Inflammation," *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity* 27 (2013): 174.

[46] Mattingly, personal practice journal entry.

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and embodiment of the Buddhist concepts of right speech, right thinking, and right perceiving. She concluded, "You can read about those things, but this is a practice that embodies those words and makes it very experiential."

To better understand the context of Amber's statement, Bikkhu Bodhi states, "The essence of the Buddha's teaching can be summed up in two principles: The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The first covers the side of doctrine, and the primary response it elicits is understanding; the secondary covers the side of discipline, in the broadest sense of that word, and the primary response it calls for is practice."[47] The Noble Eightfold Path is discussed as the way of the Fourth Noble Truth. The Noble Eightfold Path includes Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration, and the Development of Wisdom.[48] The practice of the Noble Eightfold Path, "gives rise to vision, gives rise to knowledge, and leads to peace, to discernment, to enlightenment, to Nibbana."[49]

After understanding what the teacher, teachings, and community meant in the Buddhist tradition, Amber could select her personal names for the Christian version and began practicing this version. I thought she might choose Jesus, Bible, and Spirit. Amber meditated on this question for some time before settling on "El Roi," from Genesis 16:13," "She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me.'"[50] In hindsight, Amber's choice of El Roi carries through on our shared relational values and the deep insights we gain from the "Other." She also chose Jesus as the

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[47] Bodhi, *The Noble Eightfold Path*, vii.
[48] Bodhi, *The Noble Eightfold Path*, vii.
[49] Nyanatiloka, *The Word of the Buddha: An Outline of the Buddha in the Words of the Pali Canon*, 11th ed. (Kandy, Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, 1968), 28.
[50] *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York, NY: Harper Catholic Bibles, 2011), Kindle.

Word (the living teachings in Christianity), corresponding to Dharma (*living* teachings), and the Holy Spirit as that which birthed the church community.

When I asked her what insights she gained regarding Christian spirituality, Amber said, "a deepening of understanding of Jesus as a healer." Amber also spoke of a time when she was part of a group practicing Christian spirituality in college. She says, "What I can say about [the spiritual practices] now is that the practices were not very heart-full; they were not very focused on healing. It was more intellectual. They did not penetrate, at least my heart..."[51] In week two of her practice, she wrote in her journal, "I felt like this is yoga for the inside of the body—a deeper cleansing and purifying areas that yoga does not touch."[52]

Within the spiritual practice itself, I experienced a different "feeling tone," between the Christian and Buddhist forms, which I associate with the importance of the unique individualities of the appearance of, for example, God and Buddha. At the end of the interview, I asked Amber a direct question on whether she experienced a variation in this feeling tone. She did not note anything, but she noticed differing qualities when she went back to the practice and paid attention. It is unknown whether the question itself predisposed her to this experience. Still, it leads me to continue questioning if the differing appearances of identities are essential to this practice and how.

Amber spoke about the similarities of healing and an embodied experience of the living teachings in both practice versions. "I see the real emphasis in other traditions on this developing of compassion for yourself, and in a way that embodies the Christian ideal, so that I can offer this to the world." Her experiences with this practice point to a deepening embodied experience of a

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[51] Mattingly, Zoom interview.
[52] Mattingly, personal practice journal entry.

loving, healing relationship with God. For me, her experience ties back to her earlier spiritual theology, "Finding God's abundant unconditional love at the center of this inner sanctuary provides a compass to navigate decisions."

A central issue for Amber in her spiritual theology is what needs to be addressed in God's relationship to humans. Broadly, I think it is to *redefine the relational possibilities*. Amber writes, "In the depth of solitude, a leader cultivates a compassionate heart for their own suffering while accepting the gift of God's unconditional love. When self-compassion and God's love meet, the leader's life becomes fertile ground for experiencing solidarity with all humanity."[53] I think Amber sees all beings as potential leaders, so *redefining the relational possibilities* becomes not only with something greater than ourselves but with ourselves and with others. But perhaps the solitude she speaks of is an outer solitude or perhaps quietude. This practice seems to provide Amber the safe container to experience redefining possibilities and connecting to herself and others. Toward the end of the study journals, Amber also reported a "deepening inner strength, clarity and feeling more centered/whole."

Case Study Conclusions

I began the initial experiment of teaching the Purification and Increase Refuge Practice with two questions. The first one was, "Could the practices of Buddhism help move modern Christians and clergy to a deeper understanding of spiritual heartfeltness and also a more fully embodied experience of their spirituality?" Amber reported a deepening of heartfeltness within this case study through examples and expressing a deepening sense of her practice. My second question was, "Could the mechanism or method of practice sometimes be effectively separated

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[53] Mattingly, "From the Pew to the Mat," 44.

from the religious context and moved across religions to function as an authentic practice within that tradition?" I think in this case study, the answer is, again, yes. However, there are solemn considerations for moving the practice across traditions discussed later in the paper.

But these insights are not the most valuable ones from this case study. If a person practicing the Purification and Increase meditation could experience a lasting effect in any one of the areas where Amber experienced changes (spiritual, mental-emotional, physical, or wisdom), it would be profoundly healing and life altering. Perhaps participants would have an increased sense of freedom and a deepening sense of spirituality and well-being. In hindsight, Amber also reported experiences related to the healing of relationships. Amber spoke of right speech. Unrecognized in its import during the case study, this experience foreshadowed what we would find in our study results. This experience of right speech, through a deepened sense of safety and relational trust, could potentially have a powerful effect on the quality of communications for the participants.

The Purification and Increase meditation broke down the artificial borders that Amber and I experienced between our cultures and faiths. For me, the Sacred Other became the Sacred Guest and eventually the Spiritual Friend. Sharing the results of this practice leads us to discover deeper wells of spiritual development and well-being. For example, in addition to Amber's results above, I articulated and refined my model of chaplaincy.

We have also redefined the possibilities of healing in our own lives. I, too, have experienced many spiritual, mental-emotional, and physical benefits from this and other similar practices. But what if Amber and I are not the exceptions? Would this practice produce such extraordinary and meaningful effects in a larger group of practitioners? Amber and I concluded

our class projects with a determination to find out. Thus, we developed the first Purification and Increase Research Study.

Chapter 3: Purification and Increase Research Study Design Question

Could the mechanism of a specific Purification and Increase practice of Tibetan Buddhism help move practitioners of the Buddhist and Christian traditions into a new spiritual depth to bring a more profound understanding and experience of wellness and a more fully embodied experience of their spirituality? What experiences are attributable to the practice of Purification and Increase?

Approach

There are several challenges to approaching research of any meditation, including Purification and Increase meditation. Lutz et al. reported, "The lack of statistical evidence, control populations and rigor of many of the early studies, the heterogeneity of the studied meditative states and the difficulty in controlling the degree of expertise of practitioners can, in part, account for the limited contributions made by neuroscience-oriented research on meditation. The absence of a clear operational definition of meditation limits this research."[54] As mentioned previously, many early studies on meditation did not distinguish between various types of meditation, their mechanisms, and intended goals or outcomes.[55] This problem in the research with definitions and data collecting confounds the design of our study. Additionally, researchers focused on *beneficial* effects, limiting inquiry into the full range of experiences that

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[54] Lutz et al., "Attention Regulation and Monitoring in Meditation," 163.
[55] Goleman and Davidson, *Altered Traits*, 66, 67, 69.

could include counterintuitive beneficial effects, (difficult to describe) mystical experiences, and adverse effects.[56]

Goleman surveyed and described various meditation practices as early as 1977 in his book, *The Meditative Mind.*[57] As late as 2015, researchers were struggling to define a framework of cognitive mechanisms involved in the breadth and depth of meditation practices, the boundaries of which are still not clearly defined.[58] Mindfulness is probably the most frequently researched meditation among the studies, likely followed by Transcendental Meditation and groups of affective meditations. [59]

There have been minimal studies on the practices specific to Tibetan Buddhism. A search conducted through the Meriter UnityPoint Medical Library on "Tibetan Buddhist Meditation" and "Vajrayana Practices" yielded a total of approximately ten relevant studies. Most studies included Tibetan Buddhist meditators as part of a larger Buddhist group or literature focused on comparison with other styles of meditation such as Transcendental Meditation.[60] Articles that were theoretical or descriptive were omitted.[61] Of the remainder, many had a narrow focus applied to a small portion of the results.

Two types of practice are typically identified and discussed in the literature on Tibetan Buddhism; Samata, which "aims to calm the mind by focusing on an object," and Vipassana,

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[56] Jared R. Lindahl et al., "A Phenomenology of Meditation-Induced Light Experiences: Traditional Buddhist and Neurobiological Perspectives," *Frontiers in Psychology* 4 (2014): 1, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911214901/https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00973/full.

[57] Goleman and Dass, *The Meditative Mind,* xxii.

[58] Cortland J. Dahl, Antoine Lutz, and Richard J. Davidson, "Reconstructing and Deconstructing the Self: Cognitive Mechanisms in Meditation Practice," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 19, no. 9 (2015): 521.

[59] Melinda Wenner Moyer, "Is Meditation Overrated?," *Scientific American Mind* 25, no. 3 (October 2014): 12.

[60] Hankey, "Studies of Advanced Stages of Meditation," 513–21.

[61] i.e. B. M. Smith et al., "Longitudinal Effects of a 2-Year Meditation and Buddhism Program on Well-Being, Quality of Life, and Valued Living," *Mindfulness* 10, no. 1 (2019): 2095–109. Marieke K. van Vugt et al., "Inter-Brain Synchronization in the Practice of Tibetan Monastic Debate," *Mindfulness* 11, no. 5 (2020): 1105–19.

which in combination with the outcomes of Samata, enhances meta awareness.[62] The object of

meditation can vary in Samata meditation.[63] For example, across Buddhist traditions, the object

can be the breath, the body, a candle flame, or an image such as the Buddha. Purification and

Increase practice involves focused attention on an object (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha or God,

Jesus, Holy Spirit). It includes vocalization, repetition, intentional generation of one or more

states of mind, and physical movement. The Purification and Increase meditation is challenging

to study because it has these many different components. Additionally, the meditation involves a

sense of relationship with something greater than oneself; in its original form, this relationship is

with the Buddha, Dharma, and Awakened Sangha. This level of complexity makes it challenging

to relate to other studies and identify if results are linked to the various components of the

practice or the total effect of the Purification and Increase practice as the components are

intertwined.

Defining Depth

A discussion of spiritual depth did not appear in literature searches. Since not many

people are speaking about spiritual depth, it is hard to describe or quantify it. There is also a

problem when we try to identify spiritual *depth* in that there are so many ways *depth*, as it relates

to spirituality, could be approached.

The dimensions of human experience are spiritual, psychological, social, biological, and

physical.[64] If spirituality is the dimension of human experience that "creates, informs and

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[62] Haiteng Jiang et al., "Brain–Heart Interactions Underlying Traditional Tibetan Buddhist Meditation," *Cerebral Cortex* 30, no. 2 (2019): 440.

[63] Jiang et al., "Brain–Heart Interactions," 440.

[64] Larry Culliford, *The Psychology of Spirituality: An Introduction* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011), 49.

inhabits the others,"[65] then any change in spiritual dimensions of our experience could affect the psychological, social, biological, or physical experience. Depth could be identified through any or all these dimensions, posing difficulty in creating a standard definition and measurement. A person may note changes through very different strategies depending on their level of awareness in these various dimensions of experiencing life, combined with variations in their belief system. In this study, it is essential to account for variations in beliefs and approaches across at least two traditions, Buddhism and Christianity. Common ways in which their practitioners describe depth may have very different meanings, and there may be varying assessments of spiritual depth.

Exploratory

An exploratory approach was taken because there is no known research on the specific practice itself. The goal of the study evolved to be one of identifying patterns for future research. Included in the study will be an exploration of how depth might be determined. Given the exploratory nature, the question of depth was amended, as noted above, to be more general and to establish the range of effects of the meditation practice itself. The researchers then described participants for the study.

Participants and Observers

The study of mind, consciousness, and spirituality are strongly tied together in spirituality and meditation research. Dreitcer points out that the definition of mind in Buddhism is closer to "heart" [or "heart-mind"] and that, "this is also true about the term psyche from early Christianity, translated as 'mind' and sometimes 'spirit'..."[66] He points out that in some traditions a more accurate translation for what we call mindfulness is actually "heartfeltness."

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[65] Culliford, *The Psychology of Spirituality*, 49.
[66] Andrew Dreitcer, email communication, August 6, 2021.

Goleman asserts that "despite its practical uses, the true context of meditation is the spiritual life. At their height, the states of consciousness described in classic sources can lift one out of the small-mindedness bred by daily pursuits as well as transform ordinary awareness."[67]

Discussion of mind and consciousness in classic Buddhist sources is too extensive for a complete discussion with this paper. However, in short, consciousness is "a class of ways of being aware of something that cognizes the essential nature of its object."[68] From the Western viewpoint, Rosenthal states that, "The term 'consciousness' is used in several ways: to describe a person or other creature as being awake and sentient, to describe a person or other creature as being 'aware of' something, and to refer to a property of mental states, such as perceiving, feeling, and thinking, that distinguishes those states from unconscious mental states." [69]Understanding the role of the conscious and unconscious (subconscious) in meditation, and the effects of mediation on the conscious and subconscious aspects of our being, is a key subject in the training program of at least one Buddhist lineage.[70] Relevant to this study is that in my lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, it is said that consciousness resides within various levels of mind on a spectrum.[71] This spectrum of minds is grounded at the heart center and is a location in which our experience of spiritual life can arise, and is where outer spiritual training affects the deeper levels of mind.[72] Therefore, it is possible to characterize a transformative shift of the heart

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[67] Goleman and Dass, *The Meditative Mind*, xxii.

[68] Alexander Berzin, "Consciousness," Study Buddhism by Berzin Archives e.V, accessed August 20, 2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20210831232421/https://studybuddhism.com/en/search?q=consciousness.

[69] David M. Rosenthal, "Concepts and Definitions of Consciousness," in *Encyclopedia of Consciousness* ed William P. Banks (Cambridge, MA: Academic Press, 2009), 157–69, https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-012373873-8.00018-9.

[70] Domo Geshe Rinpoche, "Introduction to the Subconscious," *Yogic Healing Weekend* (lecture, Yogic Healing Weekend, January 17, 2013).

[71] Domo Geshe Rinpoche, interview.

[72] Domo Geshe Rinpoche, interview.

as a spiritual experience within the various levels of mind. Sensing this shift, or change, is the heartfeltness spoken of in the case study.

The philosophy and study of the mind and consciousness is an ancient endeavor. However, it has been only in the last few hundred years that understanding the mind became an acceptable topic for Western science. During this, John Watson proposed that the study of psychology must not include presumptions about mental states through introspection but must be based solely on observable events.[73] His work came at a pivotal time in the behaviorist movement. A core principle is that subjects are too biased to participate directly in observation and reporting.[74] As a result, from the early 1900s till the 1990s, scientists generally eschewed gathering first-person data from subjects. There were exceptions; for example, Karl Lashley spoke against the behaviorist views in the 1930s and designed experiments that relied on behavioral tasks to reveal brain functions challenging to measure.[75]

The ongoing debate regarding the validity and necessity of first-person data continued within consciousness research. According to Varela, a significant turn in the attitude toward first-person data was in the 1990s, when David Chalmers gave a paper stating it was impossible to study consciousness without asking what people were experiencing.[76] During this time, there was also a famous study by two scientists, Crick and Koch, who made progress in studying

[73] John Broadus Watson, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," *Psychological Review*, 20 (1913): 158, https://web.archive.org/web/20210815090508/http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Watson/views.htm.

[74] John C. Malone, "Did John B. Watson Really 'Found' Behaviorism?," *The Behavior Analyst* 37, no. 1 (2014): 1–12, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911193607/https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27274955/.

[75] Karl S. Lashley, "The Behavioristic Interpretation of Consciousness. I," *Psychological Review* 30, no. 4 (1923): 237, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911194627/https://doi.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fh0073839. Karl S. Lashley, "The Behavioristic Interpretation of Consciousness II," *Psychological Review* 30, no. 5 (1923): 329–53, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911194853/https://doi.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fh0067016.

[76] Goleman, *Destructive Emotions: How Can We Overcome Them?: A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama* (New York, NY: Avery, an Imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2018), 311, referring to David J. Chalmers, "Facing up to the problem of consciousness," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2, no. 3 (1995): 200–19.

consciousness using empirical data and a preestablished understanding of the brain's visual system.[77] Since then, there has been a growing acknowledgment that first-person data is crucial in studying the mind and, in particular, consciousness.[78] Meditation (contemplative practice) is intricately connected to mind and consciousness. Thus, first-person data is essential to meditation research.[79]

Historically, there has been an emphasis on the objectivity of research to eliminate unintended bias in the studies themselves. This valuation of objectivity applies to participants and observers. However, the terms *naïve subject* and *naïve observer*, as used by Varela, give a clue to issues that arise when a participant or observer is unaware of the process in which they are participating.[80] In meditation studies, they may be unaware of the nuances of meditation experience and lack the skill or understanding to identify changes in their internal experience or environment. Therefore, the data reported may create an incomplete picture.

In *Destructive Emotions*, Varela describes why it is crucial to have first-person data and have an educated or disciplined participant.[81] He also proposed that if there is a naïve participant, there must be an educated or disciplined participant. Through his emphasis on such a spectrum, Varela highlighted the critical concept that people vary in their ability to observe. It is therefore essential to determine a level of mastery of the participant.

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[77] Joseph E. LeDoux, Matthias Michel, and Hakwan Lau, "A Little History Goes a Long Way Toward Understanding Why We Study Consciousness the Way We Do Today," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117, no. 13 (2020): 6976.

[78] David Gamez, "The Measurement of Consciousness: A Framework for the Scientific Study of Consciousness," *Frontiers in Psychology* 5, no. 714 (July 2014): 1, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911205114/https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00714/full.

[79] Gaëlle Desbordes and Lobsang T. Negi, "A New Era for Mind Studies: Training Investigators In Both Scientific and Contemplative Methods of Inquiry," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 7, no. 741 (2013): 1.

[80] Goleman, *Destructive Emotions,* 330.

[81] Goleman, *Destructive Emotions,* 330.

Varela and Davidson described a "Three Person" model of observation, where the "first person" is a disciplined participant, a "second person" is a disciplined observer, and a "third person" is described as "measurement." Essential to the model is specifying the level of mastery of the participant (from naïve to "master"), the experience of the observer (from naïve to "expert coach"), and specifying the time aspect, for example, either the immediate situation or something that happened in the past.

To assess the scope of potential effects of this practice, it was hypothesized that participants at the mastery level would result in more usable data. Since the Christian group especially did not have experience with this type of practice, the criteria for mastery included:

- Depth of education in the Christian or Buddhist tradition

- Experience with a daily contemplative practice of more than a year

- Generally acknowledged by peers to have a solid spiritual orientation

The researchers divided participants into two groups. Group One met the most criteria, and Group Two did not meet as many of the requirements. This separation was purely for the manageability of the analysis and the initial preference for more experienced participants; the groups participated in the same workshops and had the same questions in their surveys and journals. Ultimately, there appeared to be more effective criteria for categorizing the experience level of the participant. And with consideration for essential insights gained from having the full range of experience in the study, the two groups were combined for analysis. The rationale for collapsing the two groups is in *Insights on Approach to Studying Purification and Increase.*

There were three "Observers" in the study. The principal investigator has twenty years of experience in Tibetan Buddhist meditation and expertise in other contemplative arts, such as yoga and yoga therapy. The second investigator participated in the case study discussed in this

paper. At the time was experienced with contemplative practice through three years of study at the CST, training, and experience as a yoga teacher and being a Christian clergy member. She moved from a naïve participant in this style of practice during the case study to a practitioner with a year's worth of daily practice when the study began. The third observer was the mentor of the workshop, an acknowledged and accomplished master with over twenty years of meditation instruction experience, who has the most experience in this style of practice and served as the subject matter expert. The mentor also reviewed and answered questions from the students and provided guidance to the principal and second investigator.

Measurement

This study included a pre-study survey, a midpoint survey, and a final survey. Participants meditated daily and created a short journal entry about their experiences. Open-ended questions allowed the meditators to report relevant thoughts. Researchers adjusted midpoint and final surveys to accommodate patterns emerging from their journals.

Pre-Study Survey

The pre-study survey (see Appendix A) queried demographic information—name, contact information, age, education, profession, and religious orientation. We screened for mental and physical health challenges that might preclude participating in this practice and asked participants to consult with their medical providers. Additional survey sections addressed spiritual goals and effects from the practice and core evidence based assessment tool to measure spiritual experiences. Discussion of these two sections follows.

The two additional sections of the survey, "Spiritual Practice" and "Spiritual Dimensions Scale," addressed the spiritual goals and effects from practice along with utilizing a core evidence based assessment tool selected from the available tools developed to measure spiritual

experience. These two sections will be discussed in reverse order of how they appear in the survey, as they were developed in the following order.

Spiritual Dimensions Scale

Determining an evidence based assessment instrument for spiritual experience was a challenge. We began with the keywords "spiritual dimensions scales" and "spiritual assessment instruments." A preference was given to tools that had a larger body of evidence supporting their efficacy that were applicable for those of varying faith traditions or no faith tradition, could be kept intact as written rather than adapted to the study parameters, and measured spiritual experience rather than spiritual orientation, spiritual tendencies or types of spiritual practice. The Spiritual History Scale in Four Dimensions, Daily Spiritual Experience Scale, the Spirituality Scale, the Professional Quality of Life Assessment, the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, the Self-Compassion Scale, and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale were considered. All of these instruments use a Likert scale.

The Spiritual History Scale in Four Dimensions (SHSFD) is a survey of twenty-three questions categorized in the dimensions of *God Helped, Lifetime Religious Social Support, Family History of Religiousness, and Cost of Religiousness.* The construct for the instrument was developed by working with elders in a predominantly Protestant Christian area of the United States, with just over 76 percent of the participants in developing the construct being Protestant.[82] The SHSFD was ruled out due to the strong focus on religiousness over spiritualty, and the high number of questions that appeared strongly slanted toward those individuals whose spirituality centers on the belief in God. One concern that led to this rule out is that although

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[82] Judith C. Hays et al., "The Spiritual History Scale in Four Dimensions (SHS-4)," *The Gerontologist* 41, no. 2 (January 2001): 241, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911205919/https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article/41/2/239/648330.

some Buddhist practitioners may be willing and able to mentally substitute "higher power" for God within their own spiritual beliefs, others do not. Furthermore, the phrasing of the relational aspects to such a higher power within the questions may not reflect the belief system of those Buddhists who do believe in a "higher power" and, therefore, would not be an effective measure.

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) consists of sixteen questions involving the measurement of constructs such as *awe, gratitude, mercy, sense of connection with the transcendent, and compassionate love*.[83] Similar to the SHSFD, the DSES centers many of the questions on God (seven of sixteen), although the instrument does have instructions to substitute for the word God if that is more in line with the participant's beliefs. However, since the participants in the study may be predominantly those whose spirituality is not centered around God, it appeared more appropriate to adapt the instrument to the setting than to use it as written. This need for customization made is less desirable for the study at hand.

The Spirituality Scale (SS) consists of twenty-three questions on the three dimensions of Self-Discovery, Relationships, and Eco-Awareness.[84] The SS appeared well suited for use in an interfaith setting and appeared to offer a method of measuring spiritual experience. However, there were not as many articles returned in searches on efficacy and applicability as other instruments considered. Combined with the instrument being not as readily available led to considering if other available tools would be more suitable.

The Professional Quality of Life Assessment (ProQOL) has three primary dimensions of compassion, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. There is evidence based criticism that the

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[83] Lynn G. Underwood, "The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale: Overview and Results," *Religions* 2, no. 1 (December 2011): 29, https://web.archive.org/web/20201115032217/https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/2/1/29.

[84] Colleen Delaney, "The Spirituality Scale: Development and Psychometric Testing of a Holistic Instrument to Assess the Human Spiritual Dimension," *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 23, no. 2 (June 2005): 148-151, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911210515/https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0898010105276180.

burnout and secondary traumatic stress portions of the instrument did not offer measurement adequacy.[85] The ProQOL was ruled out for this reason, and also due to limitations in its application to spiritual practices, with the resultant need for a higher level of customization.

The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SBWS) evaluates both religious well-being and existential well-being.[86] At the time of the study, the SBWS was only available by purchase. A review of literature highlighted that the SBWS might have a ceiling effect for those who identify as very spiritual/religious, especially among Christians.[87] Given the preferred participant has been identified as spiritually mature, the ceiling effect may be a significant factor in this study. Combined with consideration for cost, this instrument was ruled out.

The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) developed by Neff has a long twenty-six-question form and a short twelve-question form designed to evaluate three core components of *self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness*, and their opposite constructs of *self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification*.[88] All the mentioned qualities are associated with spirituality and serve as contributing factors to meaning, purpose, and well-being. The SCS seemed well positioned to serve as the core of the pre- and post-assessment since it does not have religious questions and has a significant body of literature. It also has some questions similar to many of

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[85] Brody Heritage, Clare S. Rees, and Desley G. Hegney, "The ProQOL-21: A Revised Version of the Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) Scale Based on Rasch Analysis," *PLOS ONE* 13, no. 2 (2018): https://web.archive.org/web/20210911212007/https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0193478. Beth Stamm, *The Concise ProQOL Manual: The Concise Manual for the Professional Quality of Life Scale*, 2nd Edition (Pocatello, ID, Eastwoods, LLC, 2010).

[86] Vicky Genia, "Evaluation of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale in a Sample of College Students," *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11, no. 1 (2001): 25, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911211226/https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/S15327582IJPR1101_03.

[87] Genia, "Evaluation of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale," 28–30.

[88] Kristin D. Neff et al., "Development and Validation of a Scale to Measure Self-Compassion," *Self and Identity* 2 (2003), 223 and 227, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911211518/https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15298860309027.

the instruments reviewed. The SCS is published on the author's site with letters of permission for free use along with instructions and a long list of studies on the tool.

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWS) was the final tool reviewed. Although the WEMWS has a focus on *mental* well-being, and purposefully excludes spiritual questions, much of it is focused on the eudaimonic perspective, in which a number of the questions are centered on self-realization, a quality that is often included in the scope of spirituality.[89] In addition, religious and spiritual traditions typically have within their structure a system for developing and maintaining healthy relationships with others. However, the WEMWS is available for use only by purchase. Therefore, additional analysis of the questions was not completed.

Given the level of accessibility, the SCS was selected as the core component of the pre- and post-survey. Ten questions inspired by other surveys were added to the end of the SCS and placed in the "Spiritual Dimensions" final section of the pre-study survey. Subsequently, the final section of the pre-study survey was developed.

Spiritual Practice

The last part of the pre-study survey to be developed was the "Spiritual Practice" section. Participants were asked to report their current spiritual practices, including open-ended questions on what practices they were currently engaging in and their perceptions of the greatest identified benefits of their practices. On the first pass of development, this was the full extent of the "Spiritual Practice" section.

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[89] Sarah Stewart-Brown and Kulsum Janmohamed, *Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) User Guide Version 1* (Coventry: Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, 2008), 2, https://web.archive.org/web/20210924192506/http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/resources/user-guide.pdf

Initially, the intention was to center the surveys around the selected evidence based tool, the SCS. As the draft survey was reviewed, there appeared to be something missing. Upon further exploration by review of the past case studies and informal interviews with several practitioners of the Purification and Increase practice, few of the reported changes were included in the selected SCS tool. It was unknown whether changes related to the dimensions in the SCS; (a) occurred but were not noticed or not shared, (b) would occur across a larger population, or (c) those changes did not or would not occur at all. Therefore, a decision was made to keep the SCS but to explore how the dimensions reported in the case study and informal interviews might be captured.

Subsequently, a review was conducted of the course materials from a CST Class taught by Professor Andrew Dreitcer entitled Formation: Spiritual Practices, which was given at various times during the 2019–2020 semesters. From the materials, three handouts seemed most applicable; (a) Questions about Practices: Why Do You Practice? (b) The Flow of Discernment, and (c) Stances Toward the Stuff. The first two of the handouts addressed many of the goals or outcomes for people engaged in spiritual practices and appeared to generally reflect some of the feedback in the case study and informal interviews. In the third handout, Stances Toward Stuff, Dreitcer gives the following definition, "'Stuff' refers to, the 'intra-personal dynamics,' 'interior movements,' of our moment-to-moment experience. These are the feelings, thoughts, desires, physical sensations, intentions, awarenesses, etc. that flow through us all the time."[90] Understanding the stance that one has toward interior conditions and movements may be integral to sensing a transformative or deepening shift in one's spirituality. However, it was difficult to

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[90] Andrew Dreitcer, "Stances Toward Stuff" (lecture handout, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA, 2020).

create a short, clear set of questions that might be used based on either *Stances* or *Stuff.* Ultimately, potential questions derived from stances toward stuff were set aside for consideration in future research. However, two checkbox questions in the format of "choose all that apply" surveyed reasons/goals for what participants currently practiced as well as what they hoped to gain from the practice they were to learn in the study. These "goals" can be directly compared to reported outcomes by using the same question set in the final survey.

In comparison, two added "goal" questions generally addressed many of the missing reported outcomes. A journal questionnaire was then developed to be used during the study and to help identify and determine specific challenges, questions, and experiences that the participants were encountering to further identify possible experiences.

During Study: Journal

After the participants identified themselves, the journal included the following standard questions.

Pre-Practice:

1. Did you notice anything you would attribute to the meditation (for example, in your daily activities) since the last time you practiced? If so, what? (open question).

2. What was your day like today? (0 to 5 scale, stressful to delightful).

3. What is your energy level before the practice? (0 to 5 scale, none to energized).

4. Do you feel drawn to the practice? (0 to 5 scale, no to "Yes! I am eager to begin").

5. What time of day are you doing the practice? (Select from: Upon Waking, AM, Noon, PM, Directly After Work/PM, or Before Bed).

6. Anything else you want to note?

Post-Practice:

1. About how long was your practice? (Select from: 0–15 minutes, 15–30 minutes, 30–45 minutes, 45–60 minutes, > 60 minutes).

2. How is your energy level now? Includes but is not limited to more overall energy or sensations of vibration and tingling. (Select from: I have more energy than before meditation; I have more energy and I feel calm or clear; I have the same amount of energy; I have the same energy and I feel calm or clear; I have less energy than before the meditation; I have less energy than before the meditation and I feel calm or clear; I do not know).

3. What did you experience during the practice? (open question).

4. How did you feel after the practice/what did you notice i.e., thoughts, feelings, sensations, "aha" moments, questions? (open question).

Note that the journal only partially accounts for the time aspect of reporting. The journal invites the participant to look back at their experience during the practice which gives a sense of immediacy but is still observing past events. The survey question, "How did you feel after practice?," gives a sense of reporting past feelings, and may have been more effective with a reference to the immediate moment of time post-practice. Post-meditative states are time limited effects of meditation practice, often referred to in contemplative science as "altered states."[91] Post-meditative altered traits are enduring effects of meditation practice, indicating, "the practice of meditation transformed the brain and biology so that meditation-induced changes are seen before beginning to meditate."[92] The journal accounts for experience during meditation as well

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[91] Goleman and Davidson, *Altered Traits*, 236.
[92] Goleman and Davidson, *Altered Traits*, 236.

as surveying for altered and enduring post-meditative states, but in the study, there is no attempt to distinguish if enduring post-meditative states would meet the definition of an altered trait.

Participants were asked to complete the journal pre- and post-practice each day. However, some exceptions were made to this approach. A number of participants chose to get up at 3 or 4 a.m. to practice this meditation and then go back to sleep. These participants took mental note of their answers to the above questions and then journaled after waking for the day. Participants were also encouraged to rest, nap, or take the time they needed to transition after the meditation and before completing the post-meditation part of the survey.

For the first three days, the journal included a place to enter in questions regarding the meditation. The researchers compiled the questions and wrote an email response to these questions, which was sent to the entire group. After that, the meditators were instructed to include the questions in the most appropriate section of the journal and invited to email the researchers with any urgent questions or concerns.

The researchers reviewed the journal daily for the first ten days and then began reviewing the journals once a week. They looked for specific flags that a meditator might be struggling or have misunderstood the instructions, as well as for signs that additional instruction may be needed. The following is a list used to check for needed interventions or additional education during the review of journals:

- Emotional distress, extreme emotions, or increased negativity in daily life that might require adjustments to the practice
- Concerning physical symptoms, such as significant increases in heart rate that might require adjustments to the practice

- Changes in sleep patterns, including the ability to fall asleep and waking up at night

- Quality of dreams, including changes in symbolism, and positive or stressful dreams

- Significant changes in energy levels, primarily loss of energy

- Significant confusion, errors, or changes in the practice that may lead to a different result

During the journal review, researchers also looked for patterns emerging in the journals. This will be discussed later in the "During Practice: Interventions and Responsive Education" section.

During Study: Interventions and Responsive Education

While the study was originally designed for more experienced meditators among the Buddhist and Christian traditions, ultimately, the group was split among four experience groups, primarily, based on the number of hours of cumulative meditation practice and secondarily, on the number of years engaging in spiritual practice combined with the amount of spiritual education. However, even among the experienced meditators, many did not have experience with this type of practice. The participants were therefore not able to anticipate certain experiences or interpret their meanings consistently with the traditional instruction.

Standardizing instruction on how to engage in practice is among the numerous challenges in researching this type of meditation. Generally taught from teacher to student by oral instruction, there are certain experiences of the student which are signals for additional education by the teacher. Since there are quite a number of these experiences, it is not realistic to educate all students ahead of time on the possible experiences they may have. In addition, educating

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students on the possibility of various experiences is interfering with a student's natural progression in the meditation practice and may introduce a bias in the experiences gained or observed in meditation practice. Finally, it is unknown if making a change in the structure of the practice would change a student's experience (i.e., not vocalizing, skipping a certain section, not using beads, walking while meditating). Therefore, the researchers emphasized the importance of maintaining the structure of the practice.

Separately, it has been recently acknowledged that meditation practices, though highly beneficial for many, can have negative results in some practitioners.[93] Strong feelings of panic, concerning changes in vital signs, overwhelming negative thoughts, or increased thoughts of harm to self or others are all signs that the meditation should be stopped until a mental-health specialist can assess the benefits and risks of continuing the practice. Other feelings of strong discomfort or negativity and some forms of sleeplessness may warrant adjustments in practice in consideration of the safety and well-being of the student.

For these reasons, based on the journal entries, the researchers provided additional education or intervention when necessary. While one person reported changes in heart rate, upon further measurement by the student, it was determined that the change was not significant to the person's health or well-being. Additionally, another meditator reported crying after meditation for the first week or more. Researchers contacted the participant, and it was determined that the student was generally experiencing improvements, was not overwhelmed, was not experiencing increased negativity in daily life, and was comfortable proceeding. While there were a few other interventions, they were mainly check-ins with the students reporting continued emotional stability or improvement and an enthusiasm to continue to practice.

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[93] Lindahl et al. "The Varieties of Contemplative Experience," 1.

Initially, Christians were asked to practice using the words God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit. After the first two weeks, they were invited to choose their own words as they felt reflected the meaning of each section of the meditation as described in the workshop. Some made changes to words from their own theology that more accurately reflected the intent behind each of the sections. All participants were asked to keep the format of the practice consistent and not to make changes in the structure of the practice. Participants were encouraged to find the pacing and time of day that worked best for them. When a participant wrote in the journal or survey about changing the practice (either due to confusion, error, or intention), researchers contacted that participant individually to understand why the change was made and to educate and invite the participant to return to the structure of the practice as it was written.

Finally, if a student noted a spiritual experience that is generally considered positive within the traditional training program but interpreted it as negative or something that needed to be corrected, the researchers contacted them individually for the purposes of encouraging them to maintain their approach to practice. Mainly, this was in respect to sleep patterns, dreams, and certain emotional content experienced during or directly after meditation.

During Study: Midpoint Survey

Although potential questions were generated before the study began, the midpoint survey (see Appendix A) was viewed as an opportunity to explore patterns emerging in the journals and was therefore customized based on an initial review of journals. For example, at the start of the study practitioners were chosen based on the level of spiritual education and involvement in spiritual activities they had, but in the first few weeks, it seemed that the participants might be reporting different outcomes based on the number of hours of experience they had.

The midpoint survey consisted of seventeen questions, beginning with a survey of cumulative hours of practice and continuous time of practice. It included questions on how often participants were practicing, identifying their primary experience directly after practice, surveying for any changes, and when changes started. It included a mixture of open-and-closed questions. The survey included a question about sleep and dreams, which was developed after identifying patterns in the journals. It ended with questions about the greatest benefits of the practice, surprises, and the biggest challenges. Participants were given the opportunity to add additional thoughts or questions in the last section of the survey.

Of note, the participants had been broken into two groups at the beginning of the study for ease of later analysis, with the researchers planning to analyze Group One and reporting before moving onto Group Two, which had a different mix of practitioners. However, at the midpoint, data was collected from the entire group, and from that point forward, the data was combined. Retroactively, the pre-study survey results were combined.

Post-Study Final Survey

The final survey (see Appendix A) consisted of fifty questions total, in two parts. Part 1 was identical to the 36-question Spiritual Dimensions Scale in the pre-study survey. This allowed for a direct comparison between initial scores and final scores. The final survey also included a question, "Choose up to three of the following that you most attribute to this practice," which contained the same responses as the closed answer questions "Why do you practice?" and "What do you hope to gain from this new practice?" from the pre-study survey. However, one answer option was added, based on the journals, due to the frequency that it was mentioned: almost half of the students reported changes in their quality of speech or tone of communication. Participants were given the option of "other" to fill in their own words or "none."

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The additional twenty-four questions in Part Two were a mixture of repeated or refined questions from the pre-study study and the midpoint study combined with a few new questions. Participants had the option of taking the Part Two of the final survey anonymously, but only one participant chose to do so. Given many of the participants knew the researchers, participants were asked to evaluate how inclined they were to present their answers in a way that positively affected the research study, and how they may have changed their answers to accomplish that. To note, participants were also asked if they planned to continue the practice and were offered an open-ended invitation to add their own thoughts at the end of the survey.

Discussion on Approach to Studying Purification and Increase

As will be discussed in the "Analysis" section of this paper, there were statistically significant results in the study, as well as qualitatively meaningful patterns in the data. Part of the insights in this study were clues on how to hone future research for this practice. Those insights regarding approaching future studies of the Purification and Increase practice are mainly discussed in this section. The answers to the surveys and potential possible effects of the practice are discussed in the "Analysis" section of the paper.

Educated Participant/Observer

There are many misperceptions about meditation, which two researchers made an effort to resolve in a book called *Altered Traits*. The authors, Goleman and Davidson, oversaw a team of researchers who reviewed almost 7,000 studies on meditation, all the known research at the time. In order to determine what conclusions could be reliably made regarding meditation, they eliminated all but the highest quality research, leaving, for instance, only thirty-seven of 231 studies on Loving- Kindness. The remaining research was then analyzed.

One important point that Goleman and Davidson propose is that the outcomes experienced by meditators in studies likely vary by depth of approach and cumulative hours of experience.[94] The authors define a "Deep Path" in which meditators practice intensively, even as a lifestyle. This lifestyle may be strongly tied to the complete teachings contained in a religious tradition and is in contrast to a "Wide Path" in which the meditations are taken out of their religious context, such as Mindfulness Meditation, or in which they are "watered down" to be short interventions like "one minute meditations" or "Mindfulness at your desk."[95] Goleman and Daniel identified three levels of experience: beginners, long-term meditators, and yogis. The beginners were defined as typically having 100 hours of practice or less, the long-term meditators as having 1,000 to 10,000 hours of practice with a mean of 9,000 lifetime hours, and the yogis as having an average of 27,000-lifetime hours.[96] The authors also acknowledge there is no hard line marking the delineation between beginners and long-term meditators or between meditators and yogis.

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[94] Goleman and Davidson, *Altered Traits*, 273.
[95] Goleman and Davidson, *Altered Traits,* 3.
[96] Goleman and Davidson, *Altered Traits*, 251.

Although the Purification and Increase study investigates the practice in two religious traditions and might seem "one size fits all," the meditation itself is relational, and, therefore, must fit within the religious context in which it is taught. In that way, it is related to the lifestyle reflected in each religion. It is also traditionally practiced intensively—on a daily basis or more frequently—and in conjunction with spiritual training. With these considerations in mind, it was classified by the researchers as a practice most strongly related to the "Deep Path."

With consideration for the precision of measuring experience discussed in Goleman and Davidson, three questions were added to the midpoint survey. The first question explored lifetime hours of experience. Since there was no hard line identified to delineate between the types of meditators, more specificity was brought into lifetime hours categories, and the options offered were based primarily on the heuristic experience of the researchers. In addition, participants were asked how long they have done daily meditation practice. Daily practice is a factor in intensity and depth, and it also helps to loosely validate the lifetime hours of a participant based on the time length of individual practices done by participants and the number of continuous days practiced.

When responses were analyzed, there appeared to be a strong relationship between lifetime hours practiced and types of outcomes. Consistent with Goleman and Davidso/n, a strong recommendation for future studies is to use lifetime cumulative hours of meditation practice as a determining factor in the level of experience of the participant and observer. Entire studies could be designed with one range of lifetime hours. However, it is unknown is if the type of practice is a factor in lifetime hours and outcome. For example, if a person has 10,000 hours of experience in Mindfulness meditation, versus another person who has 5,000 hours in Mindfulness meditation and 5,000 hours of practice of Loving-Kindness. However, at a high

level, the results of the Purification and Increase study did not indicate a difference by lifetime hours in a type of meditation practice. Further analysis is needed. Years of practice also appeared to be significant but were not statistically analyzed due to time limitations. The future analysis of the number of years engaged in daily practice may yield more insights.

SCS and Evidence Based Measurement Instruments

There is a deeper discussion on the use of the SCS as a measurement tool to evaluate the effects of the Purification and Increase meditation, and that discussion has considerations for anyone conducting a study with participants who have more than 1,000 hours of lifetime practice. Because the discussion of the use of the SCS is so closely related to the results of the research study, it will be discussed alongside the analysis of the results. See the "SCS Discussion" section for more details. In the context of overall measurement tools, we will find that the SCS may not be the most effective tool to determine the depth or breadth of spiritual growth and experience.

Instruments that were identified later in the course of the study include the Spirituality Orientation Inventory (SOI) developed by Elkins, a humanistic inventory that is specifically designed to account for the spirituality of those not affiliated with a religious tradition, and The Bidirectional Spirituality Scale (BSS), which takes into account relational beliefs in something greater (vertical direction) as well as our relationship with that which is around us (horizontal direction).[97] The BSS also was based on an analysis of additional spiritual assessments. Both of

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[97] David N. Elkins et al., "Toward a humanistic-phenomenological spirituality: Definition, description, and measurement," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology,* 28, no. 4 (1988): 12-14. Aryeh Lazar, "The Spiritual Orientation Inventory (SOI): A Multidimensional Measure of Humanistic Spirituality," in *Assessing Spirituality in a Diverse World,* eds. Amy L. Ai, Paul Wink, Raymond F. Paloutzian, and Kevin A. Harris (Cham: Springer 2021). W. Paul Williamson and Aneeq Ahmad, "The Bidirectional Spirituality Scale: Construction and Initial Evidence for Validity," *Spiritual Psychology and Counseling* 4, no. 1 (2019): 15.

these instruments may contain questions more suitable to the study of the Purification and Increase practice than the SCS due to being more broadly applicable to various forms of spirituality and should be considered in future studies.

Standardizing Post-Training Interventions and Participant Education

While it may not be possible to completely standardize the training and expose the participants to the same interventions, it is possible to standardize the intervention itself. Also, because the practice and post-practice experiences of the group appeared to generally correlate to the amount of experience, it might be important to consider researching the practice within a specific experience group. Additionally, insights offered by Piccinini on the value of calibration when collecting first-person data may be helpful to future studies, encouraging researchers to identify ways to calibrate the observational approaches between participant-observers as well as between investigator-observers.[98]

One participant noted that increased mindfulness itself with respect to anticipating the journal questions and therefore observing in daily life may have had positive effects in itself. A future study might attempt to address the question, "Did mindfulness of the participant as an observer, for example, in anticipating journal questions, enhance the participant experience?"

Crossing Over: Considerations for Mechanisms of Practice

While we can identify the stances we take toward interior movements (such as feelings, thoughts, and sensations) and perhaps "interior or exterior phenomena," (referred to by Dreitcer as "stuff") as an integral part of understanding the method/mechanism of practice that could be transferred, we must also identify the "stuff," toward which we have this stance.[99] In less complex

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[98] Piccinini Gualtiero, "First-Person Data, Publicity and Self-Measurement," *Philosophers' Imprint* 9, no. 4 (2009): 12.
[99] Andrew Dreitcer, "Stances Toward Stuff."

practices than the Pacification and Increase meditation, such as Mindfulness meditation, one has various stances toward different "stuff." One might focus on the breath (stance of observing, "stuff" may be breath), while allowing all other inner movements to flow by (stance of discriminating) or choosing to respond to a pain in the knee (stance is releasing, and the "stuff" is pain and). To transfer a practice from one tradition to another, one must know deeply the stance and the stuff, as well as other dimensions (for example, we might also think along the spectrum of spiritually cognitive behavioral versus spiritually psychodynamic versus spiritually humanistic). There is a lot of "stuff," in a more complex practice such as the Purification and Increase meditation; there may be multiple stances, taken in a sometimes specific order, and directed toward all or only part of the "stuff" happening in our internal environment. A clear, accurate transfer of understanding and skills is not easily done if one is practicing at a shallow depth or mixing practices without understanding their essential nature and function.

One study participant starts to articulate other benefits and challenges in moving the mechanism of this practice from Buddhism to Christianity,

> Christianity has always been heavy on the "what" and not so good on the "how." This method, it would seem, offers lots to Christians searching for an experiential practice that affirms their beliefs. I know that there is much to know and understand about the mechanics of this meditation method, but as a Christian who does not teach any method, I'm not so interested in the details of the "how." I wonder, though, if we Christians become lazy with our "Jesus loves me, and that's all I need to know" attitude. To understand the mind and how Spirit relates to it, seems like something we Christians could better understand by learning from Buddhists.[100]

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[100] Anonymous, final survey, "Is there anything else you would like for us to know?"

These questions of the practice crossing over from Buddhism to Christianity are best addressed by one with the proper qualifications to make such a move. But so far, no one has both the expertise in the practice and multiple traditions. These issues will continue to be a question in future research. This concludes the discussion on insights into how this practice might be studied in the future.

Challenges with Journaling

As mentioned earlier, the participants were put into two groups, and, therefore, there were also two journaling groups. The journals were submitted via Google Documents on a daily basis in either Group One or Group Two and were automatically compiled into a spreadsheet for analysis. It was noted that early on, several participants appeared to be doing the practice more than once a day. However, toward the end of the study, it was determined that the form was not functioning properly, and it was assigning any number of people filling out the format around the same time to the same name. This was not seen as a major issue, as the primary analysis relies on the midpoint and final survey and secondary, on the patterns in the journals not tied to a specific participant. However, there are some trends followed through on specific participants, which might be skewed by the results. If the analysis may be significantly affected by this error, it will be noted in the discussion.

Demographic Overview of Participants

Thirty-seven participants registered, thirty-six participants started with thirty-five completed, thirty-four were meditating with regularity. Thirty-three made regular journal entries. The thirty-four *regularly meditating participants* are considered as the ongoing part of the research study for the purpose of analysis. Although the practice was offered in both the Christian and Buddhist traditions, participants did not necessarily identify as Buddhist or

Christian. Eleven practiced the Christian version and twenty-four practiced the Buddhist version, and for the purposes of the study, "Christian" refers to those participants engaging in the Christian practice and "Buddhist" refers to those participants engaging in the Buddhist practice.

Table 1: Ages of Participants

Age	Number of Participants
18–24 Years Old	1
25–39 Years Old	5
40–49 Years Old	6
50–59 Years Old	9
60+ Years Old	14

Fourteen of the participants were over sixty years of age, with the rest spread among various age ranges (See Table 1). Most of the participants were born and living in the United States and spoke English as their first language. Two participants were born and living in Germany and spoke German as their first language. Three participants were living in Mexico City and two spoke Spanish as their first language. Among the participants, there were two with a high school diploma, fifteen with an associate's or bachelor's degree, thirteen with a master's degree, and four with a doctorate. Many of the participants are or were educators, work in the medical profession, or serve as clergy.

The participants identified their primary tradition as Buddhist, fourteen identified as Christian, and five identified as other. Of the Buddhists, all were of the Tibetan tradition, while the Christians varied by denomination. At least two who self-identified as Christians are also experienced meditators in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Several of the participants reported having multiple traditions. However, in general, people who identified primarily as Christian were given the Christian practice unless they had been previously and intensively practicing the Buddhist practices. In the group of Christians intensely practicing the Buddhist practices, all but one practiced the Buddhist version of the practice. Those who were in the "Other" category (no religious tradition or other than Christian) practiced the Buddhist version. All the participants were placed with the version of the Purification and Increase meditation that most aligned with

the practices in which they were currently engaging in (Christian or Buddhist), except for one who chose to engage in the tradition in which his wife was practicing in.

The researchers asked the participants, "What is the greatest benefit you have received from each of your spiritual practices?" While a few of the participants did not have prior experience with meditation or did not identify changes attributed to meditation, in the pre-study survey, most participants reported previously experiencing effects they attributed to their contemplative practices. Some of the responses included increased mindfulness, greater self-knowledge, increased awareness, increased attention span, more wisdom or knowledge, transformation and healing, deepening of compassion, better ability to self-regulate, a sense of connection with God or Buddha, being more calm, a sense of clarity, decreased depression, less fear, and better sleep. The researchers anticipated that those with more experience would report a history of observed changes. These answers were a lesser factor in determining the confidence level that many of the participants were disciplined observers.

Demographics Discussion

After initiating the research study, it became apparent that it could be important to distinguish if a person has a singular tradition, if they are actively practicing in multiple traditions, if they have a sense of spirituality with mixed approaches, or if they do not belong to a tradition. For example, it was found that at least two known longtime experienced Tibetan meditators reported their primary tradition as Christian. Analysis of the data returned from the midpoint and the final surveys suggested that it is more likely that the range of changes attributed by participants to this mediation varied based on lifetime hours of experience and are not strongly correlated to the primary religious tradition of the meditator. However, it could be important that the meditation be aligned with the tradition in which the participant most strongly

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engages in contemplative practice. A future study might investigate more precisely whether the effects of this meditation would vary by religion and whether it is important to more deeply evaluate those who identify themselves as members of multiple religions, especially in regard to their contemplative practices.

Chapter 4: Exploratory Research Results and Discussion

There was a large amount of data collected during the process of the study. There were over 1,600 journal entries alone. At the core of the analysis were three distinct sets of data: First, was the data collected that tied to the evidence based SCS study; second, the responses to questions in the surveys (questions which were often gleaned from insights gained in reading the journals), and third, the quotes from the journals themselves. The data from Neff's SCS study will be examined first, followed by the data from the surveys. Journal entries to support the quantitative data are included. Results and data analysis for each finding will follow.

The Self-Compassion Scale

SCS Results

The SCS allowed for quantitative analysis of the data. Google forms were used to collect the data, and Google auto-generated a before and after bar graph (separately for groups 1 and 2) based on each question from the SCS. Since there was little difference between the two groups, we combined the data from the thirty-four respondents into a spreadsheet for analysis.

The SCS provides categories of *self-kindness, self-judgment* (considered opposites), *common humanity*, *isolation* (considered opposites), *mindfulness*, and *over identified* (considered opposites). The mean, median, and standard deviation were calculated for each category (and subsequently, each question). A t-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant change. Initially, this was done for the overall group by Christian and Buddhist

practices and by cumulative hours of practice. In addition, the t-test was used for each question

in the overall group and compared for the Christian and Buddhist practices and participants in

each of the cumulative hours of practice categories.

The initial categories of lifetime hours were <200; 200 to1,000; 1,000 to 3,000; 3,000 to

10,000; and >10,000. Only two participants categorized themselves as having 200 to 1,000 hours

of experience. The researchers contacted these participants, and both reported their lifetime hours

were closer to 200 hours. Goleman and Davidson reported differences between a beginner

category of fewer than 100 hours and a group of meditators of 1,000 to 10,000 hours, but also

that there were no hard lines dividing the categories.[101] The study results also showed a similar

distinction around the 200-hour mark, so since there was a significant gap between the two

participants over 200 hours and the next category of 1,000 hours, we moved the two participants

into the beginning group. Consequently, there is not a group with 200 to 1,000 lifetime hours in

the results or discussion section. To understand if there was a difference in Buddhist or Christian

cumulative lifetime experience, the researchers ran t-tests for Christians and Buddhists for

lifetime hours of less than 200 and greater than 1000 hours. The results tables are listed in

Appendix B.

We used the results of the t-test to determine whether there was a significant change

between the beginning and ending scores on the SCS. The review and analysis of the results for

the t-tables was not a linear process. The approach taken was to move back and forth between

categories and questions in the overall group and in subsets of data (i.e., lifetimes hours).

However, the discussion is presented by the results tables for ease of understanding. See

Appendix B for detailed tables.

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[101] Goleman and Davidson, *Altered Traits,* 250.

In the SCS, the six categories (i.e., self-kindness or isolation) can be scored individually or converted to the same scale (half the questions are posed in the negative) and combined for an overall score. The six categories were calculated for the overall group and then for those who were doing either the Christian or Buddhist practices. With 84 percent certainty, there was a significant change in the overall group for four categories, but there was only one category (self-kindness) for the Buddhist practice (at 84 percent, just outside our original 85 percent confidence level) and one category (Common Humanity) for the Christian practice at 92 percent certainty. A threshold of 84 percent was chosen as the confidence level because there were a number of results within 1 percent, and we wanted to more closely examine these additional results. There were four categories that showed significant change for the <200 hour's group and no other lifetime hours categories that were within 84 percent confidence. The confidence levels were generally lower as lifetime hours increased. Separating out the Buddhist and Christian groups by category into <200 hours and 1,000+ hours showed that all the significant changes appeared to be in the <200 hour's group for both Buddhists and Christians. Neither the Buddhists nor Christians showed a significant change in the Over Identified category, even though it shows overall there was a change for the group.

At the end of the study, twenty-five participants reported they practiced the meditation at least once a day, seven reported practicing four to six times a week, and two reported practicing one to three times per week. There was not enough data to analyze the last group of one to three times per week. The only category showing change was the participants who practiced meditation four to six times per week. This group showed improvement in both self-kindness and isolation.

Table 2lists the data for the SCS questions by those engaging in the Buddhist practice and those engaging in the Christian practice (with greater than 84 percent confidence in significant change). The results for individual questions were not analyzed by the amount of practice per week.

Table 2: SCS Questions with Significant Change by Christian and Buddhist Practice Before and After / P Values					
			Group	Christians	Buddhists
Q1B	Self-Judgment	I am disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.	0.109	0.179	0.57
Q6B	Over Identified	When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.	0.099	0.844	0.26
Q7B	Common Humanity	When I am down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.	0.089	0.663	0.11
Q9B	Mindfulness	When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.	0.912	0.136	0.34
Q10B	Common Humanity	When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.	0.045	0.663	0.14
Q12B	Self-Kindness	When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.	0.119	0.130	0.47
Q17B	Mindfulness	When I fail at something important to me, I try to keep things in perspective.	0.101	0.754	0.60
Q18B	Isolation	When I am really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.	0.085	0.289	0.56
Q19B	Self-Kindness	I am kind to myself when I am experiencing suffering.	0.566	0.076	0.18
Q22B	Mindfulness	When I am feeling down, I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.	0.014	0.279	0.10
Q23B	Self-Kindness	I am tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.	0.027	0.236	0.16
Q24B	Over Identified	When something painful happens, I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.	0.318	0.057	0.65
Q25B	Isolation	When I fail at something that is important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.	0.009	0.033	0.40

It is noted that Q1, Q2, Q6, Q17, and Q18 indicate there is a significant change for the group, but not by Buddhist or Christian practice. Of these five questions, all but Q6 have a lifetime hour's group, which shows a change. However, Q6 is unexplained by religious type of practice or by lifetime hours.

By Buddhist and Christian practice, change in only one question is shared between groups, "I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering." The questions showing a statistically significant change in the Buddhist-Christian and lifetime hours analysis were generally clustered in the significant categories as determined above, especially in the <200 hours group, with a few exceptions. Both the Buddhist and Christian groups had five questions with statistically significant changes, with the Buddhist Group Two out of four questions in Common Humanity and Christians having three of five questions in self-kindness. As predicted in the category analysis, the <200-hours group showed a significant change in many of the questions across the categories while the other lifetime hours groups did not. Of interest, Q1, Q21, Q22, Q23, and Q25 showed a significant change in more than one lifetime- hours group.

SCS Discussion

For the more experienced practitioners, the SCS shows little or no significant change in the 1,000-lifetime hours and over groups. There could be several reasons, including (1) the meditation does not facilitate changes in the self-compassion dimensions in the SCS, (2) the religious orientation of the participant influenced how they evaluated the questions, (3) there is a type of ceiling effect that generally happens for practitioners with experience over 1,000 hours.

Regarding option 1, that the meditation does not facilitate changes in the self-compassion dimensions in the SCS, the t-test shows that in the < 200-hour group, there were four of six categories of significant movement, and almost half of the questions for this group showed a significant change. So, there was change, just not in all the groups. Regarding the second possibility, there was some variation between the Christians and Buddhists in that each had one single category in which they showed significant change and four discreet questions of twenty-six. However, it appears that the overall level of lifetime experiences has a higher correlation to

change than the different religious traditions. One possible cause between Christian and Buddhist experiences is a theological difference. Christians generally have a central tenant of original sin, a concept of being sinners, and the need for salvation through an external force. Buddhists have a similar concept to sin in the inadvertent accumulation of negative karma, or the unintended accumulation of causes and conditions to experience negative situations in the future. However, this accumulation is set within a context of accumulation of all types of karma, including positive karma, and sits alongside the ability to change oneself. A sense of personal responsibility is cultivated, and in Tibetan Buddhism, set within the context of loving-kindness and compassion for self and others. Therefore, the emphasis on self-compassion may be more familiar to the experienced Buddhist group. However, if familiarity with self-compassion were the key difference between Buddhists and Christians, it would seem likely that there would be no movement in the Buddhist groups and significant change in the Christian groups. Yet, both groups had the same number of questions with significant change and the same number of categories. It appears that although the differences between Buddhist practice and Christian practice on specific questions could be theological, there is little difference in the overall amount of change experienced by the Buddhists or Christian practice groups. In the overall review of the journals and survey results, there appeared to be no or minimal differences in the groups in terms of the overall range of experience; although, there were a few challenges specific to the Christian practice group, such as concerns over doing a practice that had crossed over from Buddhism into their religious tradition.

The most likely explanation why there is not a significant change in the 1,000+ lifetime hours experienced group of participants seems to be the third option that there is a type of ceiling effect within the instrument itself. "Ceiling effect" is defined as "a situation in which most values

obtained for a variable approach the upper limit of the scale used in its measurement."[102] As participants began to fill in the pre-study survey, researchers noticed that the early respondents had a high level of experience and typically reported most of their answers as the uppermost or next to uppermost positive score.

These results may be present in the study because many of the participants chosen were "spiritually mature" in the sense that they had experience with contemplative practice and significant training in at least one religious or spiritual tradition. Perhaps the participants had already had time to learn and understand the importance of the dimensions in the SCS and had developed a self-perception that they are mature in their efforts to create movement along the dimensions. Another reason could be that among Buddhists and Christians, there are various reasons why one would report one is skilled at something but abstain from reporting that they are perfect at it. For Christians, perhaps perfection is reserved only as a quality for the Divine. For Tibetan Buddhists, there is a valuation that the outer world and activity cannot be perfect and that only the awakened can strive toward inner perfection. There could be hesitancy in choosing a "5" in the positively structured questions or a "1" in the negatively structured questions if, to the participant, those numbers are associated with perfection rather than excellence. Humility may also play into the self-rating, leaving room to improve along the path. It may be that a 5-point scale is impractical because it lacks the ability to exhibit smaller movements that might be reflected on a larger 10-point scale.

Other factors that could contribute to the ceiling effect might be that it is difficult to describe deepening levels of peace and changes that are occurring at what is described as a

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[102] *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, s.v. "ceiling effect," accessed August 31, 2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20210831233526/https://dictionary.apa.org/ceiling-effect.

"wordless level." "Wordless" changes can be sensed but are very difficult to describe, as, by their very nature, it is difficult to ascribe any words to these changes. For this reason, participants may be able to sense changes related to the dimensions of the SCS but not be able to describe or quantify them.

Reflecting on the exploration of various evidence based instruments that evaluate spirituality, it appears that most of the tools only assess whether someone has the various practices and beliefs that would be part of spiritual life but does not assess growth within that system. They do not test for depth on the breadth of spiritual dimensions. The questions remain if there is a way to articulate differences in the degree of spiritual experience and growth and if those experiences and growth can be quantified. In other words, are there quantitative ways we can measure the depth and breadth of spiritual growth and well-being, as reflected in our chose term "spiritual depth?" Can we measure heartfeltness or a transformative shift of the heart? Or must we remain with purely a qualitative approach?

In any case, with strong confidence, the SCS fails to reflect the depth and breadth of experiences reported across the participants' journal entries. The SCS does not capture the breadth of shifts arising along the dimensions of physical, mental, emotional, spiritual well-being conveyed in the verbatim comments from the journals or the profound depth of effects. These shifts are discussed in the section called "Transformative Themes in Reported Effects," which follows directly after the next section, an analysis of the "Questions Added to the SCS."

Questions Added to the SCS

Ten questions were added to the SCS and then scored and evaluated separately (see Appendix B for the t-tests). The trend in significant change, mainly for beginners with <200 hours of experience, continues with the 10,000+ group showing a change in two questions. Since

there are mainly Buddhists in the 10,000+-hours group, it would make sense that two of those same questions hold true in lifetime hours. However, those engaging in the Buddhist practice showed significant change in five of ten questions, with changes in empathy and compassion for others as well as a sense of humor. Those in the Christian practice showed significant change in only one question, "I have a sense of belonging; I feel connected to a group and/or all living beings." To note, the "I have enough energy to spare most days," question revealed very significant changes in the Buddhist group as well as in at least two very different experience levels in the lifetime hours groups. This finding could be related to the question of calming versus energizing, which is discussed in the "Calm versus Energizing" section below.

Survey Results

Beyond the SCS, the remaining results of the surveys can be approached by question or by searching for themes that arise across the questions. The results in this section are summarized according to the question asked and will be followed by the "Transformative Themes" section, which highlights *themes* that arose across the questions and journals, but that were not necessarily apparent from the answers to one question.

Midpoint Survey

At the midpoint, 91 percent of respondents were practicing once a day or more often. 11 percent were practicing four to six times a week, and one person was not practicing. Participants who were not practicing daily were asked what might help them practice more often, of which they reported establishing and maintaining a regular schedule, meditating with someone else, or meditating alone as the most common answers. Three group practice sessions were added in the second half of the study. Two people reported no noticeable impacts, of which one was not practicing. Twelve (33 percent) of the respondents reported they noticed change right away that

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they attributed to the practice. Eighteen (50 percent) of the respondents said that changes that

they attributed to the practice started within the first seven days, four (11 percent) reported

changes within the first three weeks, and two reported "none so far." Of these two, it was later

understood one was practicing the Christian version of the practice even though he most strongly

identified as Buddhist in order to practice with his wife, who was also in the study. This person

later reported some effects within a week of switching to the Buddhist version of the practice.

While no conclusions can be made from this one data point, considerations were incorporated in

the discussion on determining primary spiritual/religious orientation with this practitioner's

experience in mind.

At the midpoint, twenty (56 percent) people reported they like engaging in the practice

pretty much all of the time, twelve (33 percent) reported they primarily liked and occasionally

disliked engaging in the practice, one (2.8 percent) reported sometimes liking and mostly

disliking the practice, with three (8.3 percent) stating they did not know or were abstaining from

making a judgment. Despite not liking the practice at least some of the time, many of those

participants reported positive effects, such as better sleep, an experience of light, or feelings of

increased energy.

Overall

Overall, thirty-five people reported an onset of positive effects that they attributed to the

meditation practice within the first three weeks. Ten people reported challenging effects of the

practice, and one person reported a negative inner experience. In the midpoint survey, the person

who reported a negative inner experience was coached during the three-week period and reported

resolution of that experience. Of the six people who completed the midpoint but did not report a

positive effect, two reported no experiences associated with the practice and the others reported challenging experiences.

Reported Surprises

The intent behind asking about surprises was to reveal possible hidden assumptions and to give an opportunity to share experiences that the researchers and participants might not expect to report. Participants shared being surprised about many different things about this practice and were generally very surprised that they were experiencing effects or changes and the type or intensity of the experiences. The participants found it was a bit easier to do the practice than when first learned and that engaging in practice seemed more easeful. Some shared spiritual insights, such as there can be no increase without first purifying and that chanting can be energizing. One person reported positive effects (depth of meditation) on their other practices.

Your Own Spirituality

Participants were asked, "What, if anything, has this practice taught you about your own spirituality so far?" With this question, there seemed to be more variation, yet still common themes. People reported gaining different types of clarity on their experience—from gaining insights into their own beliefs and experiences to becoming clear that they were still trying to gain insight—such as one participant who stated, "I am looking for direction but still am confused as to what I believe."[103] Another participant shared, "It has become clear that my spirituality, in essence, is a relationship of love with the transcendent and with the self. This practice has taught me that daily dedication to discipline and patience is required to maintain this love relationship. I see it as an art form."[104] During the first three weeks, participants began to

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[103] Anonymous, midpoint survey.
[104] Anonymous, midpoint survey.

explore better strategies and self-discipline for their practices in general and reported levels of awareness, such as, "I think it helps me acknowledge the years of practice I have completed that lays a strong foundation for continued inner work. I think this practice reaffirms what I already believe; that I am actively practicing an authentic transformative path."[105]

There was also a distinctive theme in finding confidence, faith, or trust in the practice or in higher spiritual processes or entities such as God. One participant reported, "That there is a hunger in me for contemplation like this and stillness. I have not had that regularly in my own spiritual life; I have done a lot of Bible studies and book studies, engaged in daily prayer during various periods, worked with spiritual directors, but nothing like this. I have had very powerful experiences sensing the presence of God within community and with others. This is different and I find that it's responded to a need that I didn't know I had." Participants reported on sense of purpose, spiritual needs, orienting to spiritual life, and additional insights.

More to Express

Participants were asked an open-ended question on what more they might like to share with us. They made comments in the areas of openness, enthusiasm, and gratitude. In particular, a few still had reservations about the practice but were open to continuing to see where it would lead them. Some participants chose to share additional insights. There were a number of observations and questions about the practice itself, which showed a range of experience and insight into the workings of the practice. One participant's response reflected the significant growth process (observation, exploration, insight) that many reported in the first three weeks of practice:

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[105] Anonymous, midpoint survey.

I really connect very strongly with the first round of the purification practice, where I do the "safe direction from the Buddha," with the second round (the safe direction from the Dharma), I connect less and the third round (Sangha), my connection is decreasing even more. Why is this occurring to me? I definitely feel very safe within the direction from the Buddha; whereas, Dharma and Sangha seem more difficult for me to feel the same amount of safety. Will this improve with time? I do really trust my Sangha and try to read as much Dharma as possible. I cannot explain why my connection with Dharma and Sangha in this specific practice of Purification and Increase is less strong than with the Buddha. What came to mind to allow me to continue with some meaning was; There are some things attracted to the cleansing of each stage, Buddha, dharma, and Sangha.[106]

Discussion of Midpoint Results

At the midpoint, of the study participants had experienced a variety of effects they attributed to the practice. Change happened quickly, beginning in the first few days to the first week for many of the participants. The volume of positive responses in the open-ended questions of the second half of the midpoint survey, including this question and the question on what participants learned about their own spirituality, was an encouraging sign that there are significant positive effects as a result of this practice and few negative effects. These positive effects factor into considerations for the SCS as a measurement tool and are set in context in the section of the paper called "SCS Results and Discussion." Some of the positive effects reported in the midpoint survey will also be discussed in the "Transformative Themes in Reported Effects" section later in the paper.

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[106] Anonymous, Midpoint Survey.

The main challenges at the midpoint appear primarily related to learning the practice and establishing the motivation and self-discipline (including finding the time) to keep practicing. A few other themes emerged, including changes to sleep and dreams and the logistics of completing the journals, including computer access. These were addressed only if determined to be an issue requiring intervention, as discussed previously.

Researchers tend to emphasize the positive benefits of meditation, but there could be a significant number of negative or challenging effects experienced by practitioners across traditions.[107] One study of sixty meditation practitioners across a range of Buddhist traditions, ("The Varieties of Contemplative Experience") showed that 25 percent of participants had experienced meditation-related challenges within the first year of practice, 45 percent from one to ten years, and 25 percent above ten years.[108] Additionally, the study revealed that of those meditators reporting challenges, 72 percent experienced challenges directly after retreats while 43 percent reported re-experiencing traumatic events.[109] During the "Varieties" study, types of challenging experiences were categorized, and possible causes were discussed. However, one study is not enough. There is a general lack of discussion in the literature regarding challenging or adverse meditation-induced experiences. Across the literature, it was not generally determined whether challenging or adverse effects identified in studies were due to poor or erroneous instructions, errors in practice, pushing too hard in meditation or other types of intensity of practice, or simply part of healthy growth. In this exploratory study, the effects appeared to be

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[107] Marjatta Moimas, "Teaching Trauma-Sensitive Meditation: Principles and Competencies," thesis, *Mindfulness Studies Theses* 6, no. 10 (2018): https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/mindfulness_theses/6. Lindahl et al., "The Varieties of Contemplative Experience," 1.

[108] Lindahl et al., "The Varieties of Contemplative Experience," 1.

[109] Lindahl et al., "The Varieties of Contemplative Experience," 1.

consistent with positive trajectories; however, this question of more precisely identifying the type and cause of challenging experiences could be a focus in future studies.

Final Survey

Top Three Outcomes from Practice

In the pre-study survey, participants chose all that applied from an identical set of responses to the questions, "Why do you practice," and "What do you hope to gain from this study?" The top responses to reasons for practice were personal well-being, calming or relaxing, transformation, healing, developing spiritual qualities, helping others, becoming capable of helping others, cultivating feelings of grounding (anchoring or centering), and to experience relief from negative emotions. Of those, the ones people most hoped to gain from the study were transformation and healing. During the final survey, participants were asked to report up to three outcomes they felt they most gained from practice. There was one answer added based on the journal entries regarding improvement in communication, and healing was divided into physical and mind/spirit. Otherwise, the initial survey choices and the final remained the same. In the final survey, three outcomes stood out at the top; a) thirteen people reported they became more mindful and kinder in their communication, b) twelve people reported feelings of grounding, anchoring, or centering, and c) twelve people reported calming and relaxing. These were followed closely by experiencing relief from negative emotions (nine participants) and feeling calm or relaxed (eight participants). Of note, five people reported physical healing and alleviation of pain.

Table 3: Intended Outcomes versus Reported Outcome

	Why do you practice (check all)	Hoped to gain from the study (check all)	Top three gained from the practice
	Pre-study survey	Pre-study survey	Final Survey
Personal Well-Being	27	19	8
Calming/Relaxing	28	17	12
Peace	24	19	2
De-stress	20	14	3
Transformation	29	25	2
Healing			
Any healing (pre-study)	29	24	
Physical healing/alleviation of pain			5
Mental or Spiritual healing			2
Freeing	18	13	2
Enlivening	16	12	1
Personal Formation	8	5	2
To Develop Spiritual Qualities	25	18	1
To Become Capable of Helping/Serving Others	27	18	0
To Help/Serve Others and/or The World	25	16	5
To Connect with a Divine/Sacred Presence or Sense In Order to Experience a Particular Thing	19	9	1
To Connect with a Divine/Sacred Presence or Sense In Order to Live a Certain Way	18	10	5
To Connect with a Divine/Sacred Presence or Sense In Order to Live Beyond This Life In a Certain Way	18	11	5
Feelings of Grounding, Anchoring, or Centering	26	20	12
A Sense Of Expectancy, Openness, Or Curiosity	17	16	2
To Experience Relief From Negative Emotions Such As Sadness, Anger, Anxiety, Or Fear	25	17	9
Become more mindful and kind in communication	n/a	n/a	13
None			1

At the end of the study, eight of ten of the <200-hour participants felt calmer and more relaxed, and five of ten of the same group reported relief from negative emotions. The rest of the respondents on these two questions were either spread across the group or may be clustered in

the 1,000- to 5,000-hour range (there is not enough detail in the summary responses, but additional comments may suggest this). The responses to improvements in communication and grounding spanned all of the groups by lifetime hours. Generally, the groups with less experience have feelings of peace and calm, relief from negative emotions, and improvements in their mindfulness or kindness of communication. The more experienced group is more likely to report more connection to Divine or Sacred presence, ability to help others, and are also more mindful or kinder in communication.

Biggest Overall Impact of the Practice

In the Final Survey, the participants were asked an open-ended question about the biggest impact of the practice overall. The question allowed for positive or negative. Three people in the group reported a negative or neutral as the biggest overall impact. Otherwise, all the reports were positive. In the negative and neutral categories, one person reported no effects at all. Another reported continued difficulty sleeping, and the final comment was mixed, stating the process was good, but it was not necessarily the practice for them. The positive effects reported included the previously discussed clarity, calm, peace, alleviation of negative emotions, safety, trust, and connection. However, participants also mentioned the depth and aliveness in their spiritual life along with deepening connection to other practices.

Most Important Learning

There is a diversity of answers to the question, "What is the most important thing you are taking forward with you from this study?" Of note is a retrospective theme that came out in the Zoom Based Post-Study Debrief. Participants communicated that even when they were not practicing together, knowing others were doing this practice caused them to feel a sense of community. There was some awareness that the community was broader than their home-faith

tradition and that they were being drawn together across borders. While they would not have otherwise been identified that way, there were a few responses that began to highlight the attitude toward an interfaith community of practice, from commenting that community is important to learning that practices outside one's primary spiritual tradition can enhance your spiritual understandings. A number of comments in the journals seem to support this also, along with the post-study discussion. Pertinent to this theme, several participants also discussed the impact of this practice on their other spiritual practices, both within and across traditions.

Plan to Continue after Study

About 70 percent of participants plan to continue the practice after the study. About 10 percent of the group was not practicing or did not experience results. Of the additional 20 percent, it is likely most wanted to continue in their main practice. Half or more of the Buddhist group engage in practices that are closely related to this practice, however, many of them stated that this practice enhances their understanding of and deepens their experience of their other practices. This relationship between practices could motivate the Buddhists to return to their primary practices with occasional practice of Purification and Increase Refuge Practice or to choose to engage in this practice on a daily basis.

Discussion of Final Survey Results

Overall, people seem encouraged in their spiritual growth through this practice. Participants continued to attribute a range of post-meditation effects to the meditation practice. Most of these effects were positive, and people plan to continue the practice. Many of these effects can be organized into themes and are discussed in the "Transformative Themes" section of the paper below. In addition, there was a sense of community of practice and enthusiasm to continue that were not anticipated.

Of note, the most popular answers in the pre-study survey in intended outcomes and reasons for practice were not the most popular of the "Top Three" gains question at the end. Even though participants went in hoping for certain outcomes, they did not get the ones they hoped for the most. This would indicate that being predisposed to look for certain outcomes did not necessarily determine the top experiences of the participants. However, due to the way the questions were set up, we cannot say with high certainty that this true, so refining these questions in future research may lead to more insight.

The "No Results" Group

Before discussing select themes from the midpoint and final survey, it may be useful to note that there were three people who reported no results or very little results in this study. One person was not practicing for most of the study, which would account for little change. For the second person, their assigned meditation was not in alignment with their primary spirituality, and they spent a lot of time leading meditation for a partner. Perhaps these factors were influences of the overall effect of the meditation and should be studied further.

One person was practicing but did not observe changes. There is no explanation within the study for why this person did not report changes, but it is possible that although the meditator had more than 1,000 hours of experience, and, therefore, was considered disciplined, they were not as perceptive of subtle shifts in their internal environment. Screening questions could be developed to better assess the ability of the participant to notice subtle internal shifts.

Very few people practiced this meditation less than six days per week. Determining the differences, for example, between mediating four days per week and meditating seven days per week, may be valuable in the overall understanding of this meditation practice.

Transformative Themes in Reported Effects

Energy and Alertness

Participants were asked at both the midpoint and the end of the study to choose only one option that they felt best described their experience directly after meditation practice. In the first half, twenty participants chose "Am more calm, relaxed, or peaceful," versus only fourteen at the end. At the end, seven of ten participants in the beginners' group of <200-lifetime hours of meditation chose "more calm." Thirteen of twenty-five in the experienced group of 1,000+-lifetime hours have more energy or feel more clear, concentrated alert, and aware. Six of twenty-five reported "more calm."

In addition to reporting their most common experience, the theme of energizing was part of the individual journal entries, whether it was reported as what best describes their experience after practice or not. After practice, one participant commented feeling, "Quite a bit of energy flowing in the directions specified with the practice- energy into the top of my head and out my extremities, into the throat and out my eyes and ears, and into the heart center and clearing out the area."[110]

Discussion of Calm versus Energizing

In a joint effort between staff from the University of Singapore and Harvard Medical School, two small studies (seventeen and twenty-six participants, respectively) have been conducted in order to compare the influences of Theravadin and Vajrayana meditations in terms of autonomic system and attention.[111] Whether it is true or not, almost all meditations, and

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[110] Anonymous, journal entries.
[111] Ido Amihai and Maria Kozhevnikov, "Arousal vs. Relaxation: A Comparison of the Neurophysiological and Cognitive Correlates of Vajrayana and Theravada," *PLOS ONE* 9, no. 7 (2014): 1, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911221014/https://www.hindawi.com/journals/bmri/2015/731579/.

especially Theravadin mediations, have been promoted as calming. But given Vajrayana

meditations are described in scriptures as having "an awake quality of mind,"[112] these two

studies attempted to identify if the effects of the Vajrayana practices were calming and relaxing,

or energizing with increased awareness. The study confirmed that Vajrayana practices "induce

an arousal response" which is, "characterized by an increase in sympathetic activation, and

promotes enhanced phasic alertness."[113] In other words, Vajrayana practices were found to be

energizing (without leading to an acute stress or fight-or-flight response), and they induce mental

alertness.[114] This was in contrast to the Theravada meditations, which were shown to be calming

and relaxing.

In the Purification and Increase study, there were twenty participants that reported "calm"

as their primary experience directly after meditation. However, that decreased substantially over

time to only fourteen participants at the end of the study. In addition, it seems that more of the

less experienced meditators were experiencing calm, whereas about 52 percent of the

experienced meditators reported either feeling energized or more clear, concentrated alert, and

aware. To note, the Vajrayana studies discussed above were conducted with experienced

meditators who had an average of seven–twelve years of meditation experience in their tradition.

So, the study did not account for the beginner's experience.

Perhaps there is a general calming effect of a broad range of meditation practices as

practitioners begin, and then subsequently as the practitioner gains more experience, the outcome

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[112] Amihai and Kozhevnikov, "Arousal vs. Relaxation," 1. Ido Amihai and Maria Kozhevnikov, "The Influence of Buddhist Meditation Traditions on the Autonomic System and Attention," *BioMed Research International* (2015): 1.

[113] Amihai and Kozhevnikov, "Arousal vs. Relaxation," 11.

[114] Amihai and Kozhevnikov, "Arousal vs. Relaxation," 13. Amihai and Kozhevnikov, "The Influence of Buddhist," 9.

of practice evolves to more specific outcomes based on the type of practice and combined with the number of cumulative hours of practice. This combination would account for the downward shift in the number of calming responses and the generally higher percentage of experienced meditators who reported energizing or alertness. However, some participants were reporting feeling calm and energized, such as, "I feel much more at peace and with more energy. Once again, the assumption I made at the beginning of the practice that it would be better to do this in the morning has been challenged."[115] Another reported in the journal, "Felt calm but energetic."[116] The increase in energy may also be connected to the SCS added question, "I have energy to spare on most days," being slightly improved at the end of the study.

In conjunction with being more energizing than calming, the quality of alertness or wakefulness is also discussed in the literature.[117] This wakefulness or alertness may correspond to the participant choice of the post-meditation experience of clear, concentrated, alert and aware. This theme also appeared in the journals. For example, one participant reported improved concentration in her studies, while others reported being more mindful and aware at work.

The Experience of Light

Although the Purification and Increase meditation involves visualization of light and, therefore, experiences of light during the session was frequently discussed in the journals, few participants reported specific experiences of light in the post-meditation session. However, a few participants did include reports of post-meditation light such as, "light all around me, through

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[115] Anonymous, journal entries, March 2, 2021.
[116] Anonymous, journal entries, April 8, 2021.
[117] Willoughby B. Britton et al., "Awakening Is Not a Metaphor: The Effects of Buddhist Meditation Practices on Basic Wakefulness," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1307, no. 1 (2013): 1, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911224556/https://nyaspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nyas.12279. Amihai and Kozhevnikov, "Arousal vs. Relaxation," 2. Amihai and Kozhevnikov, "The Influence of Buddhist Meditation Traditions," 1.

me, and inside me..."[118] There could be several reasons that experiences of light were not frequently mentioned post-meditation in the overall group. First, is that they were simply not experienced. However, since the movement of light is an integral part of the meditation, and many effects were reported as continuing after meditation, perhaps it did not occur to participants to mention an experience that was familiar. Additionally, over half the group consisted of Tibetan Buddhists who have experience with at least one other practice, which might induce various types of experience of light. It could be that an experience of light is a normal occurrence that they did not think to report. It is also possible that experiences of light and energy are co-current or sometimes interpreted by participants similarly. For example, one participant reports experiencing "light, tingling, sensations of heaviness leaving my body," during meditation.[119]

On the other hand, a number of participants responded to challenges in daily life or in meditation by focusing on generating or adjusting the quality of light in the interaction. Some noted they paid more attention to where light appeared in their lives; for example, "light seems to be a central theme to me,"[120] or in the scriptures, "when reading scripture, I pay close attention to images of light as I try to lean into the language of the meditation."[121] At least one participant shifted to an overall valuation of light as a sacred experience, "During the Increase in the 3rd Round 'It's all about the light' came to me as a message, and then I had tears rolling down my face."[122]

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[118] Anonymous, journal entries, March 1, 2021.
[119] Anonymous, journal entries, March 1, 2021.
[120] Anonymous, journal entries, March 14, 2021.
[121] Anonymous, journal entries, March 19, 2021.
[122] Anonymous, journal entries, February 22, 2021.

There were reports of feeling lighter and a lightness of being during and post-meditation. One person stated, "It wasn't really a surprise, but I had a stretch of several days where I felt extremely uncomfortable and irritated followed by a sense of lightness."[123] One question that is still unanswered is if "lightness of being" could have a connotation of light as it is being discussed in this section. For example, the sensation of *lightness* is sometimes experienced by Tibetan Buddhist practitioners concurrently with a sensation as if one is *made of light*.

Lindahl, Kaplan, Winget, and Britton conducted a qualitative study with twenty-eight participants on the breadth of "meditation-induced light experiences" across Buddhist meditation traditions.[124] The group of meditators consisted of twenty Theravadin or Vipassana meditators, seven Tibetan Buddhist meditators, and seven Zen Buddhist meditators ranging in experience from three months to forty-one years, with the average being about ten years of experience. However, those 32 percent of the "Meditation- Induced Light Study" participants that reported experiencing light had from two to eight years of meditation experience, perhaps approaching or exceeding the previously discussed the "experienced meditator" definition of 1,000-lifetime cumulative hours.[125]

The specific meditation practices each meditator engaged in for the "Meditation Induced Light Study" were not noted, making it difficult to compare it with the results of the Purification and Increase meditation. However, of interest was the discussion on Neurobiological perspectives of light related experiences, where the authors proposed that Buddhist meditation can be seen as a form of sensory attenuation (involving sensory deprivation and perceptual isolation) leading to an "activation of enhanced neuroplasticity," thereby improving overall well-

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[123] Anonymous, final survey, "If so, what was the surprise?"
[124] Lindal et al., "A Phenomenology of Meditation-Induced Light," 1.
[125] Lindal et al., "A Phenomenology of Meditation-Induced Light," 3.

being.[126] A question remains if intentionally inducing the experience of light would facilitate the neuroplasticity discussed, or if the "meditation-induced light" must come from practices that do not involve conceptualization of light as a part of the meditation. However, given the participant themes in the journals of the light experience during meditation, focusing on the effects related to meditation-induced experience of light in the Purification and Increase practice using Varela and Davidson's "Three Person" observation model may be a fruitful future line of inquiry.

Mental-Emotional Effects: Safety, Intimacy, and Healing of Fear

As discussed earlier, a calming effect was one of the most highly reported observed effects of the meditation. Beyond that, about one-third of participants experienced increased degrees of freedom from afflictive emotions such as anger, fear, and stress. These reports continue the theme of the case study and were supported by reports in the journals, such as "I didn't feel any worries and I felt less anxious," and, "I lost my temper today, and the practice helped to regain balance." Notably, one participant shared, "I was yelled at for ten minutes, but I didn't get upset. I stayed calm and listened to their concern without taking it personally and accepted their apology later and was able to let it go."[127] Another shared, "I could manage to take a step back from a stressful personal situation and find a reason why this happens. Because that is Samsara and Dharma teaches that we should not be involved too much with our performance [or] blame ourselves when others do. Meditation helps not to take my reaction too serious: I could be more an observer of my own today and looked with a certain coolness on my emotions." Anger and anxiety were not the only emotions that participants commented on.

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126 Lindal et al., "A Phenomenology of Meditation-Induced Light," 11–12.
127 Anonymous, journal entries.

"Yesterday I noticed feelings of guilt arising about not studying scripture regularly. Today, I tried to let go of that."[128]

Discussion on Fear and Intimacy

A theme from the case study was healing of fear and intimacy. As discussed in the case, without intimacy, we may feel vulnerability and fear. However, if we previously lacked a sense of intimacy and suddenly experience it, this experience can also lead to feelings of vulnerability and perhaps also fear. In this study, inducing the feeling of safety may be concurrent with the feelings of calm and also an important element in addressing feelings of vulnerability and increasing the capacity for a healthy sense of intimacy. Some participants also appeared to experience a movement from vulnerability to intimacy to safety. One participant reported early on, "I am feeling a bit...vulnerable. Just going to sit with what's going on."[129] A participant shares, "[I am] happier and more connected to refuge. Nourished inside. "Safe direction," so [I] feel safe and sense of well-being."[130] Toward the end of the study, another person reported, "During the last part, I was having this thought: "I am safe."[131] The theme of safety seemed to arise even in dreams, "This time the dreams were of safe places and protection for me."[132]

Feelings of intimacy were reported in both the Christian practice group and the Buddhist practice group. One participant in the Christian practice group shared, "During the second round, the image of Jesus washing my feet came to me—we had discussed this story in a Bible study earlier this evening and it was the image that I held to during this round—when practicing the purification, it was as if he were washing my feet, bathing my heart and mind. It was very

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[128] Anonymous, journal entries.
[129] Anonymous, journal entries.
[130] Anonymous, journal entries.
[131] Anonymous, journal entries.
[132] Anonymous, journal entries.

powerful—very humbling and very intimate." One of the Buddhist practice group members comments, "Trust issues resolved. Refuge is stronger."

Safety was a topic discussed in the workshop. Increased feelings of trust and safety, along with a deepening capacity for intimacy seem like intuitive outcomes for a relational practice that has at its core the repetition of the phrase beginning, "I take safe direction in...," which seems remarkable in the short period of time it took to effect change for a substantial number of participants. Also, the strength of the healing of fear and intimacy seems remarkable. One person talked about having a safe inner temple space in which he could begin to address trauma. Participants were making definitive statements like, "Trust issues resolved." These examples, along with other statements, may point to significant progress on lifetime issues.

Effects in the Body: Reduction of Pain, Relaxation, and Healing

As part of the case study, Amber reported a reduction of her leg pain and complete elimination of lifelong chronic stomachaches for a substantial portion of the study period, and it had not returned as of the time of the report. During the exploratory research study, five participants reported physical healing or the alleviation of pain as one of their top three outcomes of practice. There were general physical relaxation benefits reported such as, "I feel so much more relaxed and 'slowed down' than I did when I started... a slight sensation of warmth through the body and a relaxing sensation in my neck and head." Some participants reported specific kinds of pain reduction or healing such as, "The neck pain I was experiencing when we started this practice back on February 20 has pretty much subsided."[133] Others reported a reduction of headaches or ability to cope better with the pain of headaches. One person had a chronic condition that resulted in never feeling hungry and difficulty sleeping. During the study, she

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[133] Anonymous, journal entries, March 24, 2021.

experienced hunger, and also reported better sleep. On March 14, another participant reported the elimination of pain in a hip that had been bothering her, "During one meditation I felt a distinct shift, an energetic something. Right then, my pain was gone, and it was gone for a while. After that, some pain returned, but it was never as deep or as strong. The pain has since resolved. It felt like that meditation was the beginning of the complete healing that took a few weeks."[134] The pain has not returned as of the writing of this paper.

Discussion of Physical Healing

In this study, it is not possible to definitively determine the physical healing effects that might be induced by the meditation. Practitioners were asked to keep their previous meditation and wellness commitments the same, resulting in only one significant change during the study period. However, participants seemed to become more mindful in general, and one or two reported better eating habits and more positive approaches to work and daily life. It is unknown how these other changes might have contributed to the overall results. Given that some of the health issues discussed were lifetime or chronic, and participants had already tried a variety of approaches to pain reduction and improved health, it appears that some effect induced by the meditation was part of the overall positive change in health. If five in thirty-five people had any of the reported effects (or even one in thirty-five) the meditation (in conjunction with traditional medical treatment) would be worth continued practice and study, especially with regard to those suffering from chronic illness or pain.

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[134] Anonymous, email communication, July 5, 2021.

Relational Effects: Communication, Connection, and Relational Healing

During the initial journal reviews, a theme of more mindful and kinder communication emerged, as one participant noted in the final survey, "Could communicate better, more calmly, and without pushing."[135] Communication seemed more prevalent in the journals than many other types of comments, so at the end of the study an option was added to the top three effects of the practice, and that option was chosen by thirteen of the thirty-four people who completed the study. The communication is not just with others, but also with oneself. One participant commented, "I was able to listen with more attention to people talking to me. My thoughts were not that monkey-minded jumping around. My concentration was much better."[136] Another reported, "Interestingly, my inner voice didn't blame me for falling asleep during the practice. I have now the certainty that an inner confidence is growing to tell me to do my practice the next day better in a nice and kind way. This inner gentle and soft approach to myself is stabilizing every day more, even if I fail to do the practice correctly. So, I continue very day and try to do the best I can."[137] A final example is, "The practice continued to be fresh and help me feel more in the present moment even if that place wasn't comfortable."[138]

A sense of loving connection or a deepening of that connection also occurred for some participants. For example, "I noticed that I was thinking about God as the creator and my direct connection to Him and the cosmos. Then, I tried saying Christ the place of Jesus and had more visions of the direct connection from earthly living to the cosmos. I could feel a connection with the cosmos during the increase—especially during the prayer with the Holy Spirit."[139] Another

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135 Anonymous, final survey, "If so, what was the surprise?"
136 Anonymous, journal entries.
137 Anonymous, journal entries.
138 Anonymous, final survey, "If so, what was the surprise?"
139 Anonymous, journal entries.

participant reports, "... a great sense of "all is well" and that I am well loved."[140] This loving connection seems to serve as a basis for more mindful and kinder communication. One participant noted, "An interaction from the previous day came to mind and I feel like the practice helped me to have love and patience for that person, then and now. The light shining on me feels like love and the nectar filling me feels like the potential to love."[141]

Participants also reported the effects of healing of their relationships, sometimes in conjunction with an improved sense of connection or more mindful or kind communication. One participant reported, "Going through the practice people came to mind that I have some troubling relationships with, and the practice gave me some focus toward approaching those people with love and strength."[142] Participants experienced changes in their understanding of relational challenges in various ways, sometimes seeing them as opportunities, such as determining, "... I have such a difficult partner in marriage in order to learn something."

One participant reported challenging dreams of a relative who had died while they were estranged. The participant continued to practice, and the dreams began to subside. At that time, there was a sense of healing of the relationship even though the relative had passed. In the final survey, the participant reported, "My weird dreams stopped and during a period I started to dream [of] my mother every day. My dreams were about daily situations and I felt happy and connected to her. Before, when I dreamed about her, I felt nostalgic and sad for not having her in my life. It felt like even though she is dead, I could still have her in my life through my dreams. I also was surprised to see her so vividly in my dreams, as the years have passed..."[143]

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[140] Anonymous, journal entries.
[141] Anonymous, journal entries.
[142] Anonymous, journal entries.
[143] Anonymous, final survey, "Is there anything else you would like for us to know?"

Finally, there were insights into changes in the emotional and relational landscape of daily living. One person noted in their journal, "Today I felt more joyful, patient, and noticed people and their needs easier. For example, in line at the grocery store, the person in front of me paid with cash and required a long time to make change. I was just waiting. No attempts to distract myself, no sense of feeling inconvenienced, noticed the cashier take a deep breath, nothing special"[144]

Discussion of Relational Effects

It seems that through a sense of connection, safety and love, participants feel less susceptible to negativities in their environment. The participants approach relationships with more clarity and awareness, and a willingness to be kinder and more positive and bring what seems like a natural mindfulness to situations, as if mindfulness is an outcome of practice rather than the practice itself. Perhaps this natural mindfulness serves as the foundation for the twelve participants who reported feelings of grounding, anchoring, or centering as one of the top outcomes of this practice. When one feels grounded in a sense of safety and connection, then we are less afraid of and less susceptible to the negativities around us. With a clearer mind, we then experience more strength, insight, and confidence in engaging positively in relationships with others.

Spiritual Effects: Sleep, Dreams, and the Subconscious

At the midpoint survey, twelve people reported that they did not notice anything had happened in their sleep or dreams. Of the remaining twenty-three people, there was a mix of changes in sleep and/or dreams. Of note, seven people reported waking up about the same time

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[144] Anonymous, journal entries.

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early in the morning, usually between 3 and 4 a.m. Six reported in the midpoint and one reported later outside of the survey. Seven people reported waking up in the morning thinking spiritual thoughts. Fifteen people noticed increased dreams or changes in the content of their dreams. Six of the eleven beginners reported the quality of their dreams changed, two of which had over 200 hours of experience. The other five reported no changes in dreams or sleep, or that they slept better.

How is your sleep/dreams since starting the practice? (choose all that apply)
36 responses

Category	Value
Nothing has changed in my…	12 (33.3%)
I fall asleep easier or sleep b…	3 (8.3%)
I have more trouble falling a…	0 (0%)
I have more trouble sleeping…	4 (11.1%)
I am waking up consistently…	6 (16.7%)
I am dreaming less or I do n…	3 (8.3%)
I dream more or remember…	9 (25%)
My dreams have become m…	11 (30.6%)
My dreams seem a bit weird…	4 (11.1%)
My dreams are more vivid.	8 (22.2%)
I wake up in the morning thin…	7 (19.4%)
I have become a lighter slee…	1 (2.8%)
I haven't paid particular atte…	1 (2.8%)
more complex	1 (2.8%)
I have not experienced any r…	1 (2.8%)
I would rather my input not v…	1 (2.8%)

Figure 4: Sleep and Dreams

Almost half of the participants experienced changes in their dream life. Reports included changes in dream content, recurrent themes, increased spiritual symbolism, vividness, and an increase in spiritual dreams, such as, "Dharma dreams all night."[145] There were also a few shared dream themes across participants who were not in contact with each other and not from different primary religious traditions. For example, a Buddhist meditator stated, "... In my dream I was searching for a path for my own, but I didn´t remember well the direction and lost orientation.

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[145] Anonymous, journal entries.

So, I turned around and found a bus, this bus was filled with my dear Sangha members and they accepted me on the bus amongst them. So, we all together went on tour to the place I didn´t find on my own. This was a marvelous and encouraging dream."[146] And a Christian shared, "Before waking before my alarm at 4 a.m. yesterday, I was dreaming that I was on a pilgrimage of the Holy Land and that I had to get up early for the tour of the day, then I woke up a bit tired but ready to practice [around 4 a.m.]."[147]

As mentioned earlier, the theme of refuge and safety seemed to arise even in dreams. For example, "I have to admit that I fell asleep right after the practice and had intense dreams. This time the dreams were of safe places and protection for me. I liked the dreams and could walk more confidently through my daily routine the next day,"[148] and "I fell asleep once I finished the practice. I had an intense dream where I found refuge and a safe place. In my dream I was looking to reorganize my life."[149] Some dreamed more generally of places of safety and sacredness, "In a second scenario I dreamed that I went to visit a friend in her place and we went to her garden, which was so beautiful and big that I felt very happy to visit her in such a calm and peaceful piece of land."[150]

Others reported experiencing dreams related to the process of purification. Some of them were symbolic, such as dreams of toilettes, or "dreams of washing and water."[151] Others were more specific in their content, such as, "That night I had a strong purification dream where old blockages were being removed from root and throat."[152]

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[146] Anonymous, journal entries.
[147] Anonymous, journal entries.
[148] Anonymous, journal entries.
[149] Anonymous, journal entries.
[150] Anonymous, journal entries.
[151] Anonymous, journal entries.
[152] Anonymous, journal entries.

Discussion on Sleep and Dreams

Responses to the sleep and dreams questions may indicate the "energizing" nature of this practice. Some participants reported having trouble falling asleep or sleeping lighter when meditating just before bed during the early part of the study in their journals and in the midpoint study. A lighter and shorter sleep is acknowledged and even valued in certain Buddhist traditions as a positive outcome, but some clinical approaches (perhaps unsuccessfully) seek to utilize various meditations such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction to address sleep problems.[153] Nonetheless, some beginner and even experienced practitioners interpreted lighter sleep as a negative outcome during the study. By the end of the study, in response to lighter sleep, some had shifted to meditating in the morning. One participant noted, "I'm not sure, the further interruption of sleep seems to have come from this practice. Because when I do it earlier in the day, I usually sleep more normally."[154] Another type of experience noted was the sense the meditation was continuing after it ended, even into sleep, "I took a ninety min nap after yesterday's practice and it felt like the purification was continuing for hours. The mantra arose in my mind spontaneously the rest of the day."[155]

This energizing quality related to sleep and dreams might be practitioners experiencing a quality of wakefulness (which involves cortical arousal) during their sleep and dreamlife.[156] There are findings that more meditation can result in less sleep, especially in long-term meditators, and, "there are several lines of evidence that suggest these increases in cortical arousal are beneficial and desirable, rather than indicators of poor sleep or insomnia."[157] Perhaps

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[153] Britton et al., "Awakening Is Not a Metaphor," 10.
[154] Anonymous, midpoint survey.
[155] Anonymous, journal entries.
[156] Britton et al., "Awakening Is Not a Metaphor," 8.
[157] Britton et al., "Awakening Is Not a Metaphor," 8.

in the Purification and Increase study, some participants experienced negative effects of less or more wakeful sleep, or perhaps the belief that a certain amount and quality of sleep is necessary for adequate rest led to perceiving or experiencing these effects as counterproductive. Further investigation is necessary.

In various traditions, it is customary for those dedicated to spiritual life to rise in the early morning hours for meditation. In some traditions that timing may be midnight, and in others, it may be 3 or 4 a.m. Surprisingly, several meditators who were not experienced with the concept of these morning meditations started to wake up in the 3 to 4 a.m. timeframe. This timeframe, in particular, is the one associated with the tradition from which the meditation came. Heuristically speaking, this seemingly spontaneous and consistent awakening from sleep occurs for a broader set of meditators. The researchers questioned if the results were an effect of the meditation and why it might be happening. However, there are no specific indicators within the study for why that might be so. Further exploration in whether these meditators who woke consistently in the early hours experienced more frequent spiritual experiences or more depth or breadth of experiences they attributed to the meditation practice may be warranted. However, it is beyond the efforts of the initial investigation. The meditators waking at that hour would complete their meditation and then go back to sleep. After a period of adjustment, most seemed to be rested enough for the day, with only one reporting trouble sleeping at the end of the study.

Seven participants reported waking up in the morning thinking spiritual thoughts. This is an interesting point, as it may indicate that thinking spiritual thoughts can be an effortless outcome to practice rather than something that must be habituated. This question of spontaneity versus habituation may be an interesting line for further exploration.

A person's dreamlife, experience of meaningful symbolism, spontaneous behaviors, and

unconscious habits are all subjects addressed in the spiritual life. A definitive line between a

mental experience and a spiritual or religious experience is not clearly defined across forms of

psychology or religions, and it does not really exist in Tibetan Buddhism. "In the West, we

habitually make a clear distinction between spirit and matter, wheras in the East, these two are

not separated."[158] However, there is some agreement that there are important links between the

two types of experience, and that there is at least some overlap.[159] As mentioned earlier,

Culliford proposes that spirituality can be viewed as the central dimension of our existence and

the dimension with which the others are organized.[160] The strong connection between Buddhism

and psychology has been acknowledged and discussed throughout the twentieth century.[161]

While there are variations in beliefs about the "unconscious mind" between branches of

Buddhism, the discussion of deeper levels of mind is central to Buddhism and exists within many

of the traditions.[162]

Also relevant to this study is the relationship between spirituality in Tibetan Buddhism

and, specifically, psychodynamic approaches, due to the common efforts to understand the levels

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[158] Preece, *The Psychology of Buddhist Tantra*, 1.

[159] Culliford, *The Psychology of Spirituality*.

[160] Culliford, *The Psychology of Spirituality*, 49.

[161] Tapas Kumar Aich, "Buddha Philosophy and Western Psychology," *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* 55, no. 6 (2013): 165. Hiroki Kato, "The Relationship Between the Psychology of Religion and Buddhist Psychology," *Japanese Psychological Research* 58, S1 (April 2016): 70, https://web.archive.org/web/20210911225220/https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jpr.12121. William Waldron, "A Buddhist Theory of Unconscious Mind (Ālaya-Vijñāna)," in *Handbook of Indian Psychology*, eds. K. Ramakrishna Rao, Anand Paranjpe, and Ajit K. Dalal (Brandon, MS: Foundation Books, 2008), 105–28, doi:10.1017/UPO9788175968448.007105–28. Preece, *The Psychology of Buddhist Tantra*.

[162] Alexander Berzin, "A Mere Making of Appearances and Cognizing Them," Study Buddhism by Berzin Archives e.V. August 31, 2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20210831234249/https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/science-of- mind/ mental-appearances/the-nature-of-appearances-gelug-explanation/a-mere-making-of-appearances-and-cognizing- them. Preece, *The Psychology of Buddhist Tantra*, 103. Thich Thanh Thien, *Buddhism Conquers Subconsciousness: Real Buddhism* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris AU, 2019), Kindle. Waldron, "A Buddhist Theory of Unconscious Mind."

of mind, and how the levels of mind relate (especially the conscious and unconscious or subconscious) and are impacted by and impacts our thought, experience, and action.[163] There are strong relationships in the valuation and use of symbolism, importance of dreams, inclusion of an alchemic component to explain certain processes, and more.[164] Most importantly, the subconscious mind has been described as the outermost part of the inner (spiritual) being, and is the meditator, whereas the conscious mind serves as the more mundane facilitator of the meditation.[165]

It seems relevant, then, not only to consider these changes in sleep and dreams as meaningful indicators in the depth of spiritual experience but also to characterize these effects in the mind as effects of this spiritual practice. Therefore, the discussion on effects in sleep and dreams should also be understood in relationship to the meditation's overall effects in spiritual depth.

Spirituality and Depth

As mentioned earlier, there appears to be a lack of definition of spiritual depth and a lack of tools to measure spiritual growth and depth or breadth of spiritual experience. Three questions were included in the final survey to help determine how spiritual growth may be defined. They are presented here so they can be understood in the context of previously discussed effects reported in the surveys and journal entries and set next to the overall conclusions on spiritual depth in the "Conclusions" section below.

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[163] Aich, "Buddha Philosophy and Western Psychology." Preece, *The Psychology of Buddhist Tantra,* 40-41, 103.

[164] Preece, *The Psychology of Buddhist Tantra*, 1-6.

[165] Domo Geshe Rinpoche, "Introduction to the Subconscious."

1. What effect has this practice had on the depth of spirituality you experience? *Mark only one oval.*

    - Deepest: it has impacted me profoundly, more than any of my other spiritual practices

    - Deep: it has impacted me the same as the deepest of my other spiritual practices

    - Strong: It has had a strong impact, but is not as much as at least one of my other spiritual practices

    - Moderate impact: I can see some good effects in my daily life or spiritual practice

    - Mild Impact: It has had a few impacts in my life or practice but not nearly as much as other practices

    - No impact.

2. How are you defining deep/strong, or how do you know when a practice is deep/strong?

3. If there is another practice that has taken you deeper into your spiritual life, what is it? How has it taken you deeper into your spiritual life than this practice? *

In response to question 1 above, nine people reported "deep," eleven reported "strong," and none reported "deepest." twelve reported mild or moderate impacts, and none reported "no impact" (see Figure 5). When defining deep or strong, participants covered the themes of having a deep intuitive feeling, or spiritual feeling, that they did not define or struggle to describe. They also measured deep or strong by the amount of change they experienced in their daily lives and the noticeable post-meditation effects, such as calm or energizing. Some participants also pointed to their dreamlife. Regarding other practices, which they may have felt gave them a deeper experience, participants typically described single life changing moments that sometimes began their spiritual careers, as well as extended periods (sometimes decades) of their main practice.

Sense of Spirituality and Other Practices

One way a practice might have spiritual effects is through the impact on the sense of spirituality or on other practices. In the case study, Amber reported experiencing a deepening of heartfeltness in her Loving-Kindness practice and the ability to both lead and participate in worship in a heartfelt way. In the exploratory study, participants reported on impacts to their spirituality at the midpoint and to their other practices in the final survey.

As mentioned earlier, at the midpoint people reported gaining different types of clarity on their experience, explored better strategies and self-discipline for their practices in general and reported new levels of awareness There was also a distinctive theme in finding confidence, faith, or trust in the practice or in higher spiritual processes or entities such as God. Participants reported on sense of purpose, spiritual needs, orienting to spiritual life, and additional insights, such as realizing, "That it's my job/purpose to be a vessel for the divine here on Earth. We are all incarnated with the divine—it's up to us to see it, feel it and act on it."[166]

At the time of the final survey, practitioners also reported insights and impacts in their other practices. "Spiritual practices outside my own tradition can enhance my own practices; a more expansive view of God."[167] "There's so much to learn from other traditions and much more to learn about my own."[168] "This daily cleansing or centering prayer comes somewhat easier than the less structured meditation practice I typically do. I also liked doing the meditation as a part of a group, feeling connected to the others who were also in the study."[169] And, "It taught me a new form of prayer that I had not experienced before and that melded well with my other prayer

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[166] Anonymous, midpoint survey, "What, if anything, has this practice taught you about your own spirituality so far?"

[167] Anonymous, final survey, "What was the greatest outcome?"

[168] Anonymous, final survey, "What was the greatest outcome?"

[169] Anonymous, final survey, "What was the greatest outcome?"

practices." Finally, "I'm having deeper practice sessions in general, which is making it difficult to wake up and dive into work, so I've taken at least an hour to "wake up" and ease into activities."[170] One person concluded, "If I manage to continue with a purifying and increase practice, it can give me a better life."

Changes in Spiritual Goals

Another way the experience of this practice could have impacted growth in spirituality is through changing spiritual goals. In the final survey, participants were asked, "Have your spiritual goals changed over the course of the study? If so, how? Are you planning on making any other changes in your spiritual practices going forward?" Nine people answered, "No," their spiritual goals have not changed. The others replied with a "Yes," except that one person was unsure. The experience of this practice has spurred many—about twenty-five participants—to new action. Some have a new or renewed desire for commitment to practice or deepening their spiritual self-discipline, while others yearn to continue to deepen their sense of relationship with their tradition, or something greater, such as God or Buddha. There is a sense that more is possible.

Summary and Conclusions

Given the reports in the journals and surveys, I anticipated that some of the participants would indicate this was a deep practice. However, they were comparing the six weeks of this practice to practices with which they had many years of experience. If it is possible to adjust the question to compare six weeks of this practice to six weeks of another practice, the results may have been different. Nonetheless, twenty participants still reported this practice as strong or deep.

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[170] Anonymous, journal entries.

Some examples include one person reporting having profound experiences about midway through the study but declined to share the details because it was so personal.[171] Another reported the most surprising outcome of practice was "an expansive vision of God."[172] And yet another participant shared, "I have become very open to some internal changes. I have found a coach and am working on some internal trauma effects and responses, because I have built the temple within."[173]

One person engaging in Christian practice shared, "Jesus had room for everyone, every situation. I felt that golden web He breathed into me was helping me make room for everyone—and not one single event, interaction, or person would destroy that for the web is strong.... With the Holy Spirit, I sensed that each bead was a drop of breath I was depositing in myself...."[174] Another discussed deeper insights into refuge, "I am holding a growing daily awareness of my own issues with deepening my capacity for refuge, and receptivity to guidance. It feels rich with possibility and potential."[175]

Although I have engaged in this practice over the years and anticipated some of its potential effects, I did not imagine the wealth of results in this study. Among its effects, the Purification and Increase practice has the potential to increase energy and alertness, produce a baseline calm and freedom from afflictive emotions, increase sense of safety and intimacy, reduce pain, increase relaxation and well-being, improve communication and connection, move a person to more spiritual depth/growth, and positively impact other spiritual practices. Although the question of defining, communicating, and measuring spiritual growth and depth remains

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[171] Anonymous, final survey, "If so, what was the surprise?"
[172] Anonymous, final survey, "If so, what was the surprise?"
[173] Anonymous, final survey, "What was the greatest outcome?"
[174] Anonymous, final survey, "What was the greatest outcome?"
[175] Anonymous, final survey, "What was the greatest outcome?"

unanswered for me, I am more deeply convinced that the Purification and Increase practice offers the potential for a depth of powerful healing and transformation over the various dimensions of our experience. In that way, it *is* spiritually deep.

My mentor often says that the Buddha did not come to make you feel better, he came to set you free. In the context of discussing safe direction, Berzin reminds us that, "No matter what our situation in life may be, Buddhist practice is intended for working on ourselves, trying to improve ourselves to become a better person."[176] The Purification and Increase meditation is from a tradition which has as its objective liberation from confusion, afflictive states, and the subsequent suffering *in order to be of benefit to all living beings*. To improve one's wellness is not the goal; to benefit others is the goal. In Christian terms, I think it would be not only to choose truth and practice virtues, but also, perhaps, it would be to offer extraordinarily wise and compassionate hospitality to others.

Regarding the Christian-Buddhist experience, I am *not* interested in delving into the theology of the traditions to compare and contrast and prove if they are ultimately compatible or mutually exclusive. And I am *not* interested in quantifying for Christians or Buddhists the "scientifically-backed benefits" of this practice. I am interested in the reduction and eventual end of suffering for all beings, a goal I believe I share with my co-researchers. But what if the possibility of significantly alleviating or ending that suffering has never occurred to a person? Will they strive for something they have never conceived as possible? It is doubtful. So, for me, the most powerful effect of the Purification and Increase was that it brought a much greater *sense of possibility* to participants. For

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[176] Berzin, "Refuge: A Safe and Meaningful Direction in Life," Study Buddhism by Berzin Archives e.V, accessed October 4, 2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20211004225229/https://studybuddhism.com/en/tibetan-buddhism/about-buddhism/buddha-s-basic-message/refuge-a-safe-and-meaningful-direction-in-life

some, this was a confirmation of a suspicion that had never been validated, and for others, it was experienced for the first time.

Within my tradition, we acknowledge a person starts on a spiritual path at whatever point they are at, and then takes on a series of transitional viewpoints as they grow in their practice. To some degree, effects like calming the mind and reducing pain are important stages, as without a certain level of calm and level of physical health, one may not be able to practice toward a greater goal. During this project, I have had some concern that the potential benefits of this practice will be misconstrued, and that people will wish to use it solely for materializing short-term health improvements and transitory happiness. Yet for many, this refuge based practice and others like it can reveal new possibilities in spiritual life, and I believe that the greater sense of possibilities will lead to a greater sense of overall safety as well as confidence (or faith) in the spiritual path. To this end, I believe the Purification and Increase meditation works effectively in both the Christian and Buddhist contexts. And while some participants with a primary Christian identity did seem concerned that the meditation came from the Buddhist tradition, in the end, it more likely catalyzed a deeper look into their scriptures, which resulted in a new understanding and perhaps deeper connection to the tradition. In addition, although I am not an expert on Christianity, there were clergy participants from several denominations and a Catholic Chaplain. The feedback I received from these participants is that the Purification and Increase meditation can be effectively practiced in alignment with Christian beliefs.

Confidence that *more is possible* combined with a deeper sense of safety is a doorway to a journey of compassion and wisdom, which, for some participants, has not been conceived of previously. When safety and confidence lead to deeper levels of compassion, it increases the potential for practitioners to achieve a certain type of "freedom," as described in, Hanna's *four*

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freedoms as well as in Buddhist commentaries.[177] For example, when we are free of afflictive

states, we may be more capable of providing a kind of extraordinary "healing hospitality" to

benefit all beings. This "healing hospitality" in the way I am positioning it here is the practice of

the Bodhisattva in my tradition, as well as the practice of the Christian exemplar of human and

Divine life, Jesus. Because of this, I think the dissemination and study of this practice within this

exploratory effort leads to outcomes in alignment with my own beliefs as well as the viewpoints

within my tradition.

Two Dominican colleagues taught me that the attitude of *studying* other religious or

spiritual traditions helps to clarify and enhance one's own faith in one's primary tradition. This

valuation of study is an important principle to the Dominican priests who taught me about it.

Perhaps taking a step beyond study to this shared *practice* might offer a way of engaging certain

Christians and Buddhists together across religious lines, and the Purification and Increase

practice combined with its potential for positive effects on relationships, may cause the artificial

borders between us and our "neighbors" to soften or disappear.

Looking Forward

Normally, one would determine specific next steps for this work. But as a contemplative, I

think it is important to take a longer retreat before making such decisions. Although I think it is

time to pause and reflect, I can share that questions remain in several categories. I wonder what

benefits will come from continuing to evaluate the effects of this specific mediation practice.

Will more research serve to further the spiritual goals of myself or my tradition in regard to

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[177] Fred J. Hanna, "Freedom: Toward an Integration of the Counseling Profession," *Counselor Education and Supervision* 50, no. 6 (2011): 366-367. Domo Geshe Rinpoche, "Coming Clean." Domo Geshe Rinpoche, interview. Domo Geshe Rinpoche, "Purification and Increase Meditation."

helping living beings become liberated from suffering and inspired to care for and benefit other living beings? To understand this practice, one option is to explore more deeply the approaches for effective research on such meditations as the Purification and Increase practices and then apply effort to further development of research approaches.

I wonder what effect, if any, the skill level of the workshop teacher has on the overall experience of the meditation practice. And in a similar line, there are myriad considerations for how a mechanism of practice is moved from one tradition to another. What standards should meditation teachers have in how deeply they understand the stances toward the elements of the meditation as well as the mechanisms of practice when they teach and when they cross borders of various traditions? Is there a need to raise awareness regarding the need for professional standards of competency for meditation teachers in general? Would the Purification and Increase studies specifically help to give deeper insight into the development of those standards?

Also, of import is a question that we ran into near the end of the study: What happens when Christians practicing this meditation experience transformation and want to learn more? This resource is not available within their tradition, and the profound effects may encourage them to seek more answers or instruction. More opportunities and deeper training are available in the Buddhist tradition, but so far has not been identified in the Christian tradition. How will this be addressed if in the future more Christians are invited to learn this practice?

Another option is to explore not just how a *sense of* spirituality contributes to well-being, but how spiritual *growth* may factor into well-being, and conversely how well-being factors into spiritual growth. Is there another tool available to assess growth that would apply across the major faith traditions and/or would it be beneficial to develop an assessment of spiritual growth? What might we learn if we use the insights from this study to continue the effort to describe,

type, and assess for depth of spiritual experience as it relates to well-being? Could that be useful in chaplaincy and pastoral care models where relationships are established over a longer period of time, such as in skilled nursing facilities?

Becoming the Sacred Guest

There was a point in the process of writing this paper when I realized how deeply the Christian (and Buddhist clergy of other traditions) I know have welcomed me into their spiritual ways. I felt a deep sense of intimacy with an "Other's" spiritual world, and I took pause as the reality of that precious and vulnerable gift hit home in new ways. This realization was further compounded when I realized that I arrived at the themes in this paper because *I have been the welcomed guest* of my clergy colleagues. As much as they have let me into their worlds, I have also let them into mine. They have touched my heart with their deep expressions, and that has left a strong imprint of their spirituality within my own being. This experience is a true gift of hospitality. In the face of my curiosity and willingness, these clergy have led me across the border of the "Other," and allowed me to visit and, to some extent, embody their very personal theological and spiritual homes. This locus brings me back to a quote that appears in Reverend Doctor Mattingly's doctoral project, "Strangers—the others whom we suspect, fear, distrust, dismiss, even damn—may be sacred. They may be living examples of holiness that we need to survive, even thrive in a world where violence aims to separate us and mire us all in despair. Strangers become our teachers if we are willing to pay attention."[178]

As a chaplain, these embodied spiritual locations serve as navigational points for *my own location within* the ocean of Christianity, when as a chaplain or counselor or simple companion, I step into the patient's theological world as a Sacred Guest. My first navigational point is very clearly my North Star of Buddhism, always guiding me back to a home I never left. My second navigational

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[178] Nancy Haught, *Sacred Strangers: What the Bible's Outsiders Can Teach Christians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017).

point is *my home location within the expression Christianity as I make a visit in service of the "Sacred Other."* That locus within Christianity *very specifically* comes due to the heartfelt hospitality of those others who I now call my Spiritual Friends. I wonder if within this gift of hospitality if there might be fresh insights for interfaith chaplaincy models.

Dedication for the End of the Project

I shall end here as usual in my tradition. Perhaps the intent of a doctoral project is to present one's expertise, but I must acknowledge that I am still very much a learner on the spiritual path. If there are beneficial insights, they come from the exceptional teachers in my life, the positive influence of my Spiritual Friends, and, in particular, the guidance and blessing of my root mentor. And if this effort in any way causes confusion or doubt, then it was certainly my error alone.

May the supreme jewel Bodhicitta

That has not arisen, arise and grow;

And may that which has arisen not diminish

But increase more and more.

Appendix A: Study Surveys

Pre-Study Survey

Demographics

*Completion of this survey affirms you acknowledge it is important to consult with your healthcare professional to ensure this study is appropriate for you and that you have consulted with your medical providers.

1. Email

2. Please give us your full name, address, & best phone number to reach you

3. What age range best describes you? *Mark only one oval.*

   - 18–24 years old

   - 25–39 years old

   - 40–49 years old

   - 50–59 years old

   - 60+ years old

4. What best describes the highest education level you have completed? * *Mark only one.*

   - High School Diploma

   - Associates or Bachelor Level College Diploma

   - Master's

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* Denotes that answer was required in the survey.

- Doctorate

5. What is your profession? *

6. Are you currently experiencing any mental-health challenges?* *Mark only one.*

   - Yes and I am currently under the care of a mental-health professional and my condition is stable.

   - Yes and I am not currently under the care of a mental-health professional and/or my condition is not stable.

   - Yes and I am navigating the challenges with my own self-care practices.

   - Yes but I have not sought professional care.

   - No, but I have in the past few months.

   - Not currently.

7. Are you currently experiencing any physical health challenges?* *Mark only one.*

   - Yes, and I am currently under the care of a medical professional and my medical condition is stable.

   - Yes, and I am not under the care of a medical professional and/or my condition is not stable.

   - Yes, and I am navigating the challenges with my own self-care practices.

   - Yes, but I have not sought professional care.

   - No, but I have in the past few months.

   - Not currently.

8. What is your religious orientation including specific denomination, lineage, or sect? *

9. Why are you participating in this practice? *

10. What do you hope to gain from this practice? *

Spiritual Practice

11. What spiritual practices do you currently engage in & how long have you practiced each one? *

12. What is the greatest benefit you have received from each of your spiritual practices?

13. Why do you practice? I.e., what is the point/goal/purpose (... that defines how you frame your ultimate intention, your meta-framing of the Why) *Check all that apply.*

- Personal Well-being

- Calming/Relaxing

- Peace

- De-stress

- Transformation

- Healing

- Freeing

- Enlivening

- Personal Formation (to be or act like some exemplary person or ideal or standard)

- To Develop Spiritual Qualities

- To Become Capable of Helping/Serving Others

- To Help/Serve Others and/or The World

- To connect with a Divine/sacred Presence or Sense in order to experience a particular thing

- To connect with a Divine/sacred Presence or Sense In order to live a certain way

- To connect with a Divine/sacred Presence or Sense In order to live beyond this life in a certain way

- Feelings of grounding, anchoring, or centering

- A sense of expectancy, openness, or curiosity

- To experience relief from negative emotions such as sadness, anger, anxiety, or fear

- Other:

14. What do you hope to gain from this new practice? *Check all that apply.*

- Personal Well-Being

- Calming/Relaxing

- Peace

- De-stress

- Transformation

- Healing

- Freeing

- Enlivening

- Personal Formation (to be or act like some exemplary person or ideal or standard)

- To Develop Spiritual Qualities

- To Become Capable of Helping/Serving Others

- To Help/Serve Others and/or The World

- To connect with a Divine/sacred Presence or Sense in order to experience a particular thing

- To connect with a Divine/sacred Presence or Sense In order to live a certain way

- To connect with a Divine/sacred Presence or Sense In order to live beyond this life in a certain way

- Feelings of grounding, anchoring, or centering

- A sense of expectancy, openness, or curiosity

- To experience relief from negative emotions such as sadness, anger, anxiety, or fear

- Other:

Spiritual Dimensions Scale

Based on Dr. Kristen Neff's Scale: 1=Almost Never; 5=Almost Always

15. I am disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

16. When I am feeling down, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that is wrong. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

17. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

18. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

19. I try to be loving toward myself when I am feeling emotional pain. *Mark only one oval. (1-5)*

20. When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

21. When I am down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

22. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

23. When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

24. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

25. I am intolerant and impatient toward those aspects of my personality I do not like. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

26. When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

27. When I am feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

28. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

29. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

30. When I see aspects of myself that I do not like, I get down on myself. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

31. When I fail at something important to me, I try to keep things in perspective. *Mark only one.. (1-5)*

32. When I am really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

33. I am kind to myself when I am experiencing suffering. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

34. When something upsets me, I get carried away with my feelings. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

35. I can be a bit cold-hearted toward myself when I am experiencing suffering. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

36. When I am feeling down, I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

37. I am tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

38. When something painful happens, I tend to blow the incident out of proportion. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

39. When I fail at something that is important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

40. I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality I do not like. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

41. I have a strong sense of purpose in my life. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

42. I am able to connect with the Divine/Sacred Presence in daily life experiences. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

43. I trust in the inherent goodness in others. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

44. I have a sense of belonging; I feel connected to a group and/or all living beings. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

45. I have enough energy to spare on most days. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

46. I have empathy for others. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

47. I have compassion for others. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

48. I aspire to or have altruistic great compassion for others. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

49. I see clearly how to take compassionate action in the world. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

50. I am able to find lightness & humor even in challenging situations. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

Midpoint Survey

1. Please choose your name/email from the list.

2. Please estimate the cumulative hours of meditation practice you have done over your lifetime.

   - More than 10,0000
   - From 3,000–10,0000
   - From 1,000–3,000
   - From 200–1,000
   - 0–200

3. Please estimate the longest length of time you have done a daily meditation practice for a continuous period in your life. (plus or minus a few skipped days here and there)

   - For three weeks
   - For six weeks to six months
   - For six months to a year
   - For a year to two years
   - For two years to five years
   - For five years to ten years
   - For ten years to twenty years
   - For more than twenty years

4. Please estimate the total length of time you have done a daily meditation practice in your life. For example, you consistently meditated for two years in the late 1990s and

then took a break and in 2010 you began a daily meditation practice that you have been doing ever since. The answer for this example would be twelve–thirteen years.

- For three weeks

- For six weeks to six months

- For six months to a year

- For a year to two years

- For two years to five years

- For five years to ten years

- For ten years to twenty years

- For more than twenty years

5. About how often have you practiced this meditation during the study

- More than once a day

- Once a day, maybe I missed one here or there

- Four to six times a week

- One to three times a week

- I have not been practicing

6. If you have not been practicing daily, is there anything that would be helpful in being able to practice daily for the next three weeks?

7. What effect has this practice had on the depth of spirituality you experience (if this is the first time you have done spiritual/contemplative practice, please select from the last 3) *

- Deepest: it has impacted me profoundly, more than any of my other spiritual practices
- Deep: it has impacted me the same as the deepest of my other spiritual practices
- Strong: It has had a strong impact, but is not as much as at least one of my other spiritual practices
- Moderate impact: I can see some good effects in my daily life or spiritual practice
- Mild Impact: It has had a few impacts in my life or practice but not nearly as much as other practices
- No impact
- This is my first practice and it seems deep
- This is my first practice and it has had some moderate or mild effect
- This is my first practice and it has had little or no effect

8. Overall, how have you experienced changes since starting this meditation? Choose challenging if something has come up that could be interpreted as negative or difficult, but you recognize it as part of a healing/learning process. Choose negative if you feel the meditation has had an ongoing adverse effect and does not appear to be part of healing/learning. Chose positive if you feel it has had positive impacts. Check all that apply.

- There have been no impacts.
- I have had challenging impacts in my life.

- I have had challenging inner experiences (i.e., in my thoughts, feelings and attitudes, spiritual being).

- I have had challenging impacts in my other spiritual practices (besides time to practice other practices).

- I have had negative impacts in my daily life.

- I have had negative inner experiences (i.e., in my thoughts, feelings and attitudes, spiritual being).

- I have had negative impacts in my other spiritual practices (besides time to practice other practices).

- I have had positive impacts in my daily life.

- I have had positive impacts in my other spiritual practices.

- I have had positive inner experiences (i.e., in my thoughts, feelings and attitudes, spiritual being).

9. When did changes start to occur

- Right away, almost as soon as I started practicing

- Within the first few days or the first week

- Just recently, in the last week or so

- Not so far

10. Do you currently like or dislike engaging in this practice?

- I do not know, or I am abstaining from making a judgment

- I dislike engaging in this practice pretty much all the time

- I sometimes like and primarily dislike engaging in this practice

- I primarily like and sometimes dislike engaging in this practice

- I like engaging in this practice pretty much all of the time

11. If I have to choose only one, directly after practice I:

- Am more calm, relaxed, or peaceful

- Feel more clear, concentrated, alert, or aware

- Have more energy, tingling, light, or vibration

- Feel more tired, unmotivated, bored, or confused

- Am overwhelmed by my thoughts, feelings and/or emotions

- Observe nothing much

12. How is your sleep/dreams since starting the practice? (choose all that apply)

- Nothing has changed in my sleep/dreams.

- I fall asleep easier or sleep better through night.

- I have more trouble falling asleep.

- I have more trouble sleeping through the night.

- I am waking up consistently at about the same time every night.

- I am dreaming less or I do not remember my dreams.

- I dream more or remember my dreams more often.

- My dreams have become more symbolic, interesting, or insightful.

- My dreams seem a bit weird or stressful.

- My dreams are more vivid.

- I wake up in the morning thinking spiritual thoughts.

- Other

13. What has been the biggest impact of this practice up till now?

14. What has been the biggest challenge with this practice so far?

15. What surprised you the most about this practice?

16. What, if anything, has this practice taught you about your own spirituality so far?

17. What else would you like for us to know? Are there any lingering questions?

Final Survey

Part 1 Spiritual Dimensions Scale

1. I am disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

2. When I am feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that is wrong. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

5. I try to be loving toward myself when I am feeling emotional pain. *Mark only one oval. (1-5)*

6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

7. When I am down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

9. When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

11. I am intolerant and impatient toward those aspects of my personality I do not like. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

12. When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

13. When I am feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

16. When I see aspects of myself that I do not like, I get down on myself. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

17. When I fail at something important to me, I try to keep things in perspective. *Mark only one.. (1-5)*

18. When I am really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

19. I am kind to myself when I am experiencing suffering. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

20. When something upsets me, I get carried away with my feelings. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

21. I can be a bit cold-hearted toward myself when I am experiencing suffering. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

22. When I am feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

23. I am tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

24. When something painful happens, I tend to blow the incident out of proportion. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

25. When I fail at something that is important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

26. I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality I do not like. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

27. I have a strong sense of purpose in my life. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

28. I am able to connect with the Divine/Sacred Presence in daily life experiences. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

29. I trust in the inherent goodness in others. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

30. I have a sense of belonging; I feel connected to a group and/or all living beings. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

31. I have enough energy to spare on most days. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

32. I have empathy for others. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

33. I have compassion for others. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

34. I aspire to or have altruistic great compassion for others. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

35. I see clearly how to take compassionate action in the world. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

36. I am able to find lightness & humor even in challenging situations. *Mark only one. (1-5)*

Part 2 Spiritual Practice

4. Please estimate the cumulative hours of meditation practice you have done over your lifetime.

   - More than 10,0000

   - From 3,000–10,0000

   - From 1,000–3,000

   - From 200–1,000

   - 0–200

5. Please estimate the longest length of time you have done a daily meditation practice for a continuous period in your life. (plus or minus a few skipped days here and there)

   - For three weeks

   - For six weeks to six months

   - For six months to a year

   - For a year to two years

   - For two years to five years

   - For five years to ten years

   - For ten years to twenty years

   - For more than twenty years

6. During the study period, how inclined were you to structure your answers in a way that you thought would have a positive impact on the results of the research? * *Mark only one oval.*

- Always

- Often

- Sometimes

- Rarely

- Never

- I do not know

7. If you adjusted your answers in the journals or surveys, did you, (in random order, choose all that apply) *Check all that apply.*

   - Make your answers more generic or "mainstream"

   - Keep the details of your deepest experiences a secret, according to your tradition

   - Give answers a bit more positive than your actual experience

   - Make your answers significantly more positive than your actual experience

   - Keep your answers cool and objective when you felt inspired, curious, or amazed

   - Downplay your positive responses, spiritual feelings, or unexplained experiences

   - Try to keep answers cool and objective when you felt bored and uninterested or concerned

   - Make your answers a bit more negative than your actual experience

   - Give answers significantly more negative than your actual experience

   - Downplay your challenging experiences

   - Report meditating more than you did

   - Other:

8. Please update us on how often have you practiced this meditation during the study. *

   Mark only one oval.

   - More than once a day

   - Once a day, maybe I missed one here or there

   - 4–6 times a week

   - 1–3 times a week

   - I have not been practicing

   - Other:

9. Were you more steady in daily practice * *Mark only one oval.*

   - During the first half of the study

   - During the second half of the study

   - Throughout the whole study

   - Neither the first or second half

10. Overall, how did you feel about engaging in this practice now? * *Mark only one oval.*

    - I do not know, or I am abstaining from making a judgment

    - I dislike engaging in this practice pretty much all the time

    - I sometimes like and primarily dislike engaging in this practice

    - I primarily like and sometimes dislike engaging in this practice

    - I like engaging in this practice pretty much all of the time

11. Did you notice any changes in your daily life? What was the biggest impact?

12. During the study period, did anyone close to you mention they observes changes in you?

    If so, what changes?

13. Have you now or in the past practiced other spiritual practices? * *Mark only one oval.*

- Yes

- No, this is my first practice and it seems deep (*Skip to question 15*)

- No, this is my first practice and it has had mild to moderate impact (*Skip to question 15*)

- No, this is my first practice and it has had no impact. (*Skip to question 15*)

Your Spiritual Experience

14. What effect has this practice had on the depth of spirituality you experience * *Mark only one oval.*

- Deepest: it has impacted me profoundly, more than any of my other spiritual practices

- Deep: it has impacted me the same as the deepest of my other spiritual practices

- Strong: It has had a strong impact, but is not as much as at least one of my other spiritual practices

- Moderate impact: I can see some good effects in my daily life or spiritual practice

- Mild Impact: It has had a few impacts in my life or practice but not nearly as much as other practices

- No impact.

15. How are you defining deep/strong or how do you know when a practice is deep/strong?

16. If there is another practice that has taken you deeper into your spiritual life, what is it? How has it taken you deeper into your spiritual life than this practice? *

Purification and Increase Practice Experience

Having completed the six weeks, kindly update your answers.

17. What has been the biggest impact of this practice overall, positive or negative? *

18. What has been the biggest challenge with this practice? *

19. Did you have any more surprises in the second half? * *Mark only one oval.*

- Yes

- No

20. If so, what was the surprise?

21. Which one of these was the most prominent directly after your practice during the second half of the study? * *Mark only one oval.*

- Am more calm, relaxed, or peaceful

- Feel more clear, concentrated, alert, or aware

- Have more energy, tingling, light, or vibration

- Feel more tired, unmotivated, bored, or confused

- Am overwhelmed by my thoughts, feelings and/or emotions

- Observe nothing much

22. Choose up to three of the following that you most attribute to this practice. * *Check all that apply.*

- I have a sense of personal well-being.

- I have more peace.

- I have less stress.

- I experienced transformation.

- I experienced healing of my mind/spirit.

- I feel it was freeing.

- I feel more enlivened.

- I am more able to be or act like some exemplary person or ideal or standard (Personal Formation).

- I developed spiritual qualities.

- I am more capable of helping/serving others.

- I am more able to help/serve others and/or the world.

- I can connect with a Divine/sacred Presence or Sense in order to experience a particular thing.

- I can connect with a Divine/sacred Presence or Sense In order to live a certain way.

- I can connect with a Divine/sacred Presence or Sense In order to live beyond this life in a certain way.

- I have feelings of grounding, anchoring, or centering.

- I have a sense of expectancy, openness, or curiosity.

- I felt relief from negative emotions such as sadness, anger, anxiety, or fear.

- I became more mindful and kind in my communication.

- I generally feel more calm/relaxed.

- I did not experience any of these.

- I experienced physical healing or alleviation of pain.

- Other:

23. Is there anything else you would like for us to know?

Looking Forward

24. What is the most important thing you are taking forward with you from this study? *

25. Do you plan to continue this practice? *Mark only one oval.*

- Yes

- No

- Other:

26. Have your spiritual goals changed over the course of the study? If so, how? Are you

planning on making any other changes in your spiritual practices going forward? *

27. Provide optional identifying information.

Appendix B: Tables for Neff SCS and Added Questions

	Self-Kindness	Self-Judgment	Common Humanity	Isolation	Mindfulness	Over Identified
Table 4: SCS Categories Before and After / P Values (with added low/high hours by religion)						
Group	0.123	0.672	0.038	0.062	0.226	0.155
Buddhists	0.618	0.776	0.084	0.437	0.508	0.431
Christians	0.163	0.640	0.314	0.162	0.189	0.186
Buddhists <200	0.515	0.738	0.112	0.166	0.599	0.298
Christians <200	0.024	0.156	0.063	0.844	0.335	0.516
Buddhists 1,000+	0.775	0.826	0.493	0.752	0.783	0.781
Christians 1,000+	0.600	0.436	0.790	0.735	0.735	0.303
All 0–200	0.058	0.342	0.012	0.082	0.306	0.075
All 1000–3000	0.494	0.484	0.820	0.459	0.611	0.452
All 3000–10000	0.497	0.914	0.313	0.218	0.222	0.675
All Over 10,000	0.671	1.000	0.763	0.724	0.540	0.828
4–6 Times a week	0.075	0.866	0.249	0.0900	0.430	0.221
Daily or more often	0.744	0.845	0.347	0.292	0.339	0.470
Practiced 1–3 times per week (not enough data)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

SCS Questions by Christian and Buddhist Practice Before & After / P Values

			Group	Christians	Buddhists
Q1B	Self-Judgment	I am disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.	0.109	0.179	0.57
Q2B	Over Identified	When I am feeling down, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that is wrong.	0.263	0.258	0.85
Q3B	Common Humanity	When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.	0.142	0.213	0.20
Q4B	Isolation	When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.	0.368	0.284	0.83
Q5B	Self-Kindness	I try to be loving toward myself when I am feeling emotional pain.	0.858	0.425	0.26

Q6B	Over Identified	When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.	0.099	0.844	0.26
Q7B	Common Humanity	When I am down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.	0.089	0.663	0.11
Q8B	Self-Judgment	When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.	0.441	1.000	0.80
Q9B	Mindfulness	When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.	0.912	0.136	0.34
Q10B	Common Humanity	When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.	0.045	0.663	0.14
Q11B	Self-Judgment	I am intolerant and impatient toward those aspects of my personality I do not like.	0.156	0.850	0.36
Q12B	Self-Kindness	When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.	0.119	0.130	0.47
Q13B	Isolation	When I am feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.	0.332	0.617	0.88
Q14B	Mindfulness	When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.	0.549	0.251	0.77
Q15B	Common Humanity	I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.	0.294	0.213	0.78
Q16B	Self-Judgment	When I see aspects of myself that I do not like, I get down on myself.	0.161	0.628	0.18
Q17B	Mindfulness	When I fail at something important to me, I try to keep things in perspective.	0.101	0.754	0.60
Q18B	Isolation	When I am really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.	0.085	0.289	0.56
Q19B	Self-Kindness	I am kind to myself when I am experiencing suffering.	0.566	0.076	0.18
Q20B	Over Identified	When something upsets me, I get carried away with my feelings.	0.646	0.391	0.61
Q21B	Self-Judgment	I can be a bit cold-hearted toward myself when I am experiencing suffering.	0.433	0.279	0.59
Q22B	Mindfulness	When I am feeling down, I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.	0.014	0.279	0.10
Q23B	Self-Kindness	I am tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.	0.027	0.236	0.16
Q24B	Over Identified	When something painful happens, I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.	0.318	0.057	0.65
Q25B	Isolation	When I fail at something that is important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.	0.009	0.033	0.40
Q26B	Self-Kindness	I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality I do not like.	0.244	0.587	0.75

Added Questions by Christian and Buddhist Before and After / P Values					
			Group	Christians	Buddhists
Q27B	Added	I have a strong sense of purpose in my life.	0.462	0.276	0.05

Q28B	Added	I am able to connect with the Divine/Sacred Presence in daily life experiences.	0.180		0.203	0.36
Q29B	Added	I trust in the inherent goodness in others.	0.918	0.441		0.60
Q30B	Added	I have a sense of belonging; I feel connected to a group and/or all living beings.	0.586		0.098	0.48
Q31B	Added	I have enough energy to spare on most days.	0.374		0.210	0.04
Q32B	Added	I have empathy for others.	0.813	0.295		0.00
Q33B	Added	I have compassion for others.	0.717	0.388		0.52
Q34B	Added	I aspire to or have altruistic great compassion for others.	0.891		0.567	0.17
Q35B	Added	I see clearly how to take compassionate action in the world.	0.162		0.591	0.00
Q36B	Added	I am able to find lightness & humor even in challenging situations.	1.000		0.370	0.01

SCS Categories by Lifetime Hours Before and After / P Value						
	Self-Kindness	Self-Judgment	Common Humanity	Isolation	Mindfulness	Over Identified
Group	0.123	0.672	0.038	0.062	0.226	0.155
0–200	0.058	0.342	0.012	0.082	0.306	0.075
1000–3000	0.494	0.484	0.820	0.459	0.611	0.452
3000–10000	0.497	0.914	0.313	0.218	0.222	0.675
Over 10,000	0.671	1.000	0.763	0.724	0.540	0.828

SCS Questions by Lifetime Hours Before and After / P Value							
			Group	0–200	1000–3000	3000–10000	Over 10,000
Q1B	Self-Judgment	I am disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.	0.109	0.166	0.854	0.028	1.000
Q2B	Over Identified	When I am feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that is wrong.	0.263	0.049	0.873	0.606	0.242
Q3B	Common Humanity	When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.	0.142	0.021	0.186	0.411	1.000
Q4B	Isolation	When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.	0.368	0.277	0.439	0.598	0.817

Q5B	Self-Kindness	I try to be loving toward myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.	0.858	0.534	0.492	1.000	0.740
Q6B	Over Identified	When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.	0.099	0.255	0.389	0.490	0.115
Q7B	Common Humanity	When I am down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.	0.089	0.009	0.796	0.257	0.397
Q8B	Self-Judgment	When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.	0.441	0.640	0.113	1.000	1.000
Q9B	Mindfulness	When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.	0.912	0.384	0.933	0.772	1.000
Q10B	Common Humanity	When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.	0.045	0.054	0.822	0.195	0.760
Q11B	Self-Judgment	I am intolerant and impatient toward those aspects of my personality I do not like.	0.156	0.356	0.067	1.000	0.347
Q12B	Self-Kindness	When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.	0.119	0.076	0.389	0.501	0.806
Q13B	Isolation	When I am feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.	0.332	0.162	0.662	0.364	0.242
Q14B	Mindfulness	When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.	0.549	0.209	0.840	0.838	0.347
Q15B	Common Humanity	I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.	0.294	0.070	0.318	0.857	0.854
Q16B	Self-Judgment	When I see aspects of myself that I do not like, I get down on myself.	0.161	0.163	0.602	0.338	0.446
Q17B	Mindfulness	When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.	0.101	0.403	0.009	0.704	0.223
Q18B	Isolation	When I am really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.	0.085	0.240	0.468	0.169	0.545
Q19B	Self-Kindness	I am kind to myself when I am experiencing suffering.	0.566	0.591	1.000	0.660	0.608
Q20B	Over Identified	When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.	0.646	0.727	0.224	0.690	0.359
Q21B	Self-Judgment	I can be a bit cold-hearted toward myself when I am experiencing suffering.	0.433	0.166	0.157	1.000	0.817
Q22B	Mindfulness	When I am feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.	0.014	0.258	0.662	0.142	0.128
Q23B	Self-Kindness	I am tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.	0.027	0.016	0.218	0.139	0.242
Q24B	Over Identified	When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.	0.318	0.282	0.382	0.302	0.535
Q25B	Isolation	When I fail at something that is important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.	0.009	0.022	0.186	0.146	0.803
Q26B	Self-Kindness	I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality I do not like.	0.244	0.171	0.662	0.792	0.242

			Group	0–200	1,000–3,000	3,000–10,000	10,000+
	Added	I have a strong sense of purpose in my life.	0.462	0.091	0.824	1.000	0.347
	Added	I am able to connect with the Divine/Sacred Presence in daily life experiences.	0.180	0.035	0.746	0.611	0.681
	Added	I trust in the inherent goodness in others.	0.918	0.131	0.227	0.422	0.347
	Added	I have a sense of belonging; I feel connected to a group and/or all living beings.	0.586	0.182	0.880	0.641	0.242
	Added	I have enough energy to spare on most days.	0.374	0.055	0.493	0.862	0.040
	Added	I have empathy for others.	0.813	0.209	0.530	0.277	1.000
	Added	I have compassion for others.	0.717	0.223	0.428	0.806	0.141
	Added	I aspire to or have altruistic great compassion for others.	0.891	0.488	0.428	0.717	0.347
	Added	I see clearly how to take compassionate action in the world.	0.162	0.023	0.759	1.000	0.217
	Added	I am able to find lightness & humor even in challenging situations.	1.000	0.053	0.464	0.641	1.000

Added Questions by Lifetime Hours Before and After / P Value

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